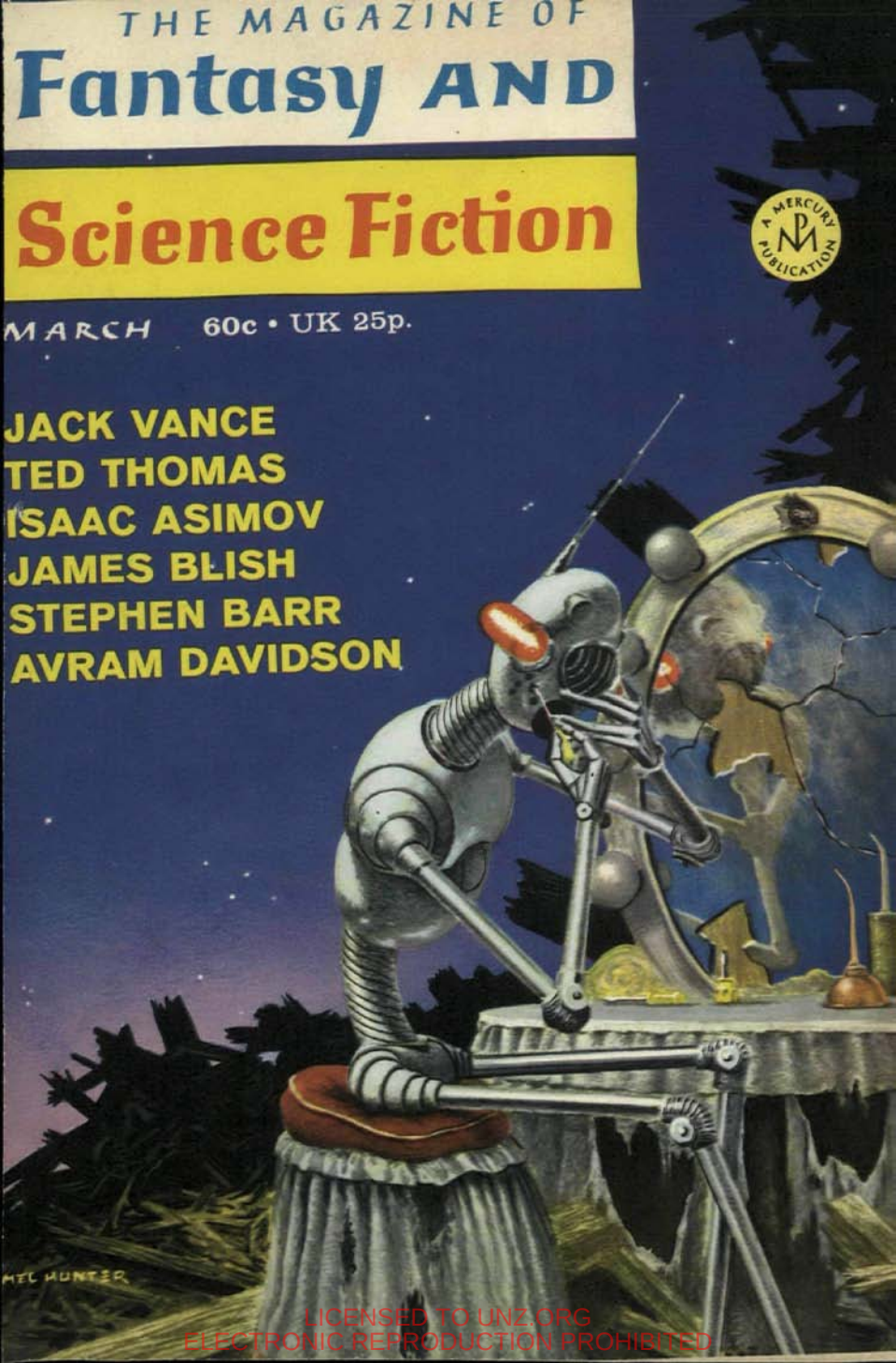
THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

MARCH 60c • UK 25p.

JACK VANCE
TED THOMAS
ISAAC ASIMOV
JAMES BLISH
STEPHEN BARR
AVRAM DAVIDSON



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

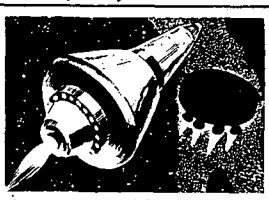
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How's your Imagination Quotient?

Test yourself, then treat yourself to *3 volumes of fascinating mind-stretchers for just $1*

No one on your world has ever seen the stars. A strange legend foretells something called "night" will come tomorrow for the first time in 3,000 years. What will happen when it does?

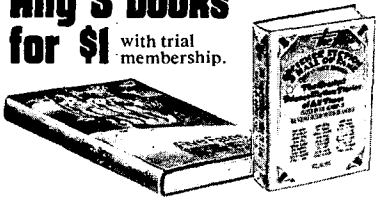
You're the first astronaut to visit another planet. Your ship lands and you find the house you grew up in. The woman on the porch is your grandmother! What's the explanation?



A great starship suddenly confronts another ship from an alien civilization. Can either race be sure the other won't conquer his world? Is there an alternative to destroying each other?

You'll find the dazzlingly imaginative, beautifully logical answers in three famous stories in *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame*—an anthology of the greatest SF literature of all time. And you can have this 572-page, hard-bound book—plus two more masterpieces of the world's most entertaining, provocative fiction—for just $1 plus shipping and handling. It's all part of the fun when you join THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB. The coupon tells how easy it is.

Any 3 books for $1 with trial membership.



279. Science Fiction Hall of Fame, I. 26 "winners," chosen by Sci-Fi Writers of America. Ed. Robert Silverberg. Pub. ed. **$7.95**

602. ANYWHEN by James Blish. Seven strangely compelling stories with emphasis on our inescapable humanity. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

642. Stand on Zanzibar, by John Brunner. Life in U.S. 100 years from now. Hugo Award Winner. 600 pages. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

618. Dangerous Visions. Anthology of 33 original stories never before in print by Sturgeon, Anderson, others. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

796. Quest for the Future by A. E. Van Vogt. The electrifying adventure of the man who discovers immortality and the secrets of time.

620. *Childhood's End,* by Arthur C. Clarke. Mankind's last generation on earth. "Wildly fantastic!" — *Atlantic.* Pub. ed. **$4.50**

807. Neanderthal Planet, by Brian W. Aldiss. 4 novella gems. Never before published in U.S.! Shrewd, witty, ingenious.

803. Rockets in Ursa Major by Fred Hoyle and Geoffrey Hoyle. A spaceship returns crewless, announcing the coming of a deadly peril. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

607. Five Fates. A remarkable *tour de force.* Five top writers supply their own endings for, "After life, what?" Pub. ed. **$4.95**

804. The Year 2000, An Anthology edited by Harry Harrison. Thirteen compelling new stories on the quality of life 30 years from now. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

806. Beyond the Beyond, by Poul Anderson. 6 novellas by Hugo Award winner. About scientists, pirates, "loners."

622. The Foundation Trilogy, by Isaac Asimov. The ends of the galaxy revert to barbarism. Pub. ed. **$10.50**

Science Fiction Book Club 22-S91
Dept. 13-MSX, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

Please accept my application for membership and rush the 3 books whose numbers I have printed below. Bill me just a $1.00 plus shipping and handling for all 3. Each month send me the Club's free bulletin "Things To Come" describing the two monthly selections and other book bargains. If I do not wish to receive one of the two monthly selections, or prefer an alternate or no book at all, I simply indicate so on the form provided. I pay only $1.49, plus shipping and handling for each book I take. (Occasional extra-value selections are slightly more.) I need take only 4 books in the coming year and may resign any time after purchasing 4 books.

NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted with my introductory package, I may return it in 10 days and membership will be canceled. I will owe nothing.

[ ] [ ] [ ]

MR.
MRS.
MISS _____ *Print name*

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

If under 18, parent must sign above. | Office use only

Book Club editions are sometimes reduced in size, but they are all full-length, hard-cover books you will be proud to add to your permanent library. Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Toronto. Offer slightly different in Canada.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

Including Venture Science Fiction

MARCH • 22ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

NOVEL

The Faceless Man (2nd of 2 parts)	JACK VANCE	57

SHORT STORIES

The Tour	TED THOMAS	5
The Sun Pond	GEORGE CHESBRO	20
The Way Things Work	RON GOULART	33
The Tenant	AVRAM DAVIDSON	50
The Art Machine	STEPHEN BARR	108
Birdlime	B. L. KELLER	122

FEATURES

Cartoon	GAHAN WILSON	13
Books	JAMES BLISH	14
Films	BAIRD SEARLES	49
Science: Euclid's Fifth	ISAAC ASIMOV	111

Cover by Mel Hunter (see page 48)

Edward L. Ferman, EDITOR & PUBLISHER *Isaac Asimov,* SCIENCE EDITOR
Andrew Porter, ASSISTANT EDITOR *Dale Beardale,* CIRCULATION MANAGER
Joseph W. Ferman, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO.: 51-25682

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 40, No. 3, Whole No. 238, Mar. 1971. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 60¢ a copy. Annual subscription $7.00; $7.50 in Canada and Mexico, $8.00 in all other countries. Postmaster: send Form 3579 to Fantasy & Science Fiction, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Publication office, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Editorial submissions should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second Class postage paid at Cornwall, Conn. 06753 and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A.

© 1971 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This ingenious new story from Ted Thomas is, like his earlier, and much anthologized story "Test" (April 1962), concerned with the notion of controlling people who kill. Mr. Thomas's latest book is THE YEAR OF THE CLOUD *(in collaboration with Kate Wilhelm).*

THE TOUR

by Ted Thomas

JAMES BLAKEMAN FELT A SINKing feeling in his stomach; so he read the letter again. A group like that? At a time like this? He got up and walked to the window. He looked down the length of the attractive, two story, criminal rehabilitation center, a monument in brick and cement and glass and steel. Yet this group was coming to destroy it. He could not let them do it.

He went back to his desk and read the list of names. Senator Guy Reardon of Mississippi, chairman of the committee on penal institutions (up for reelection); Congressman Hanley Carter of Iowa, chairman of the House committee on criminal rehabilitation (up for reelection); Judge Charles Bonadio, court of common pleas, Pennsylvania, (up for reelection); Doctor Henry Bellingham, President, University of Michigan; Doctor Gladys Callahan, President, Illinois College for Women; State Senator Richard Otter of Kentucky (up for reelection); and the list went on. Heads of TV networks, presidents of newspaper and magazine chains. Fifteen of them, the most bitter opponents that could be mustered against the Tinkerton system of rehabilitation. How had they gotten clearance to make this visit?

James Blakeman rubbed his queasy stomach and asserted his customary self-discipline. He was a man accustomed to dealing with his own problems, but he saw that with this one he needed help. He touched a communication button, identified himself, and asked to be put through to the secretary on an emergency basis.

Without preamble the secretary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said, "I just learned of the tour, Jim. I assume that's what you're calling about."

"Yes. How did this damn thing get started? Who cleared it?"

"Nobody. The Senate group quietly set it up themselves and sent the notices to arrive at this time. They want to catch us all off guard."

Blakeman said, "Oh, well. Without official clearance, why don't I just refuse to let them in?"

"Can't. It's my personal opinion that they timed it this way, hoping we'd panic and not let them into the center. Then they would clobber us in the election with the publicity. Hold off for a few minutes, Jim, while we try to work something out. I'll get back to you. Everything normal there at the center?"

"Yes. I can run them through on the usual tour, all right. I don't like what they're doing, but I can run them through."

There was a moment's pause, then the secretary said, "Jim, isn't it true that there is some danger in these tours? Aren't some of the areas hazardous?"

Blakeman almost gave a quick denial, but there was something in the secretary's tone of voice that made him hesitate. He said slowly, "Well, maybe."

"Hm," said the secretary. "Well, I'll get right back to you. We have an hour."

Blakeman touched the off button, then he summoned his supervisors. Quickly they came, with concerned looks on their faces, and Blakeman realized that his receptionist must have already told them what was happening. Blakeman said, "It seems most of you already know we're going to have to run a tour for a group that wants to abolish the Tinkerton system. We'll just have to be patient with them and do what we can to make them understand the system in all its ramifications."

The others looked at each other, frowning. They knew as well as Blakeman that if the election were lost, the center would be abolished. Doctor Arnold, the round, jolly humorist among the professional staff, said, "Well, maybe we could give them a good whiff of the trankton gas as they walk down a control corridor." He smiled, and the others smiled at him. Doctor Arnold would always have his little joke. But James Blakeman did not smile. Twice now, inside the space of five minutes, someone had been thinking along incredible lines.

Blakeman said, "I wanted to make sure you knew about this. You might pass the word to your respective staffs. The group is the right size to form a single tour; so we'll only have to do it once. Any questions?" There were none, so they left.

The comm light was blinking when Blakeman returned to his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

desk. It was the first presidential assistant, and he opened the conversation by saying, "Can anyone hear us?"

"No, Mr. Atkins."

The assistant seemed to Blakeman to be ill at ease when he spoke. "You will certainly have to go through with the tour, Doctor Blakeman. We can only point out to you the extreme importance of the situation. The forthcoming election is in the balance at the present time. Any slips out there could cost us the election. Much more than your future expansion is at stake. Anything you can do will be greatly appreciated by the administration. If you can bring it off right, you might remove some of the issues these do-gooders have concocted. So we wish you well, Doctor Blakeman." Blakeman made his polite responses, but when he rang off he began to wonder. Why the opening question about secrecy? But since there were things to do, he got on the phone.

He called the maintenance section to check on the housekeeping, and the ground crew to make certain the area was picked up. He talked to the synthesis section, the control corridors staff, the neoethidine administration department, and the restraint section. He paced back and forth in his office thinking of additional personnel to alert, and he made more calls. Then, half an hour early, the receptionist called him to say that the visitors had arrived and were waiting for him in the lobby.

As soon as Blakeman walked into the lobby, Senator Reardon stepped up to him and said, "Blakeman, I'm sure you've had your instructions to show us only the good side of this operation you're running, but I warn you, we intend to see every filthy part of it. None of your standard tours today."

Blakeman kept his temper. "We show everyone everything; we answer all questions; we have nothing to hide here."

Professor Oberton said, "I don't see how you can justify a hallucinogenic drug center like this at a time when one of the country's major problems is the abuse of narcotics and drugs." There was a chorus of "yeses" and "me too's" from the group.

Blakeman held up his hand and said, "Please, I can't hope to argue with all of you at the same time. Let us start the tour, and you can ask your questions as we go along. There will be experts in each section who will explain what's happening." He hesitated but could not help adding, "And I think when we're done, you will all have a much better grasp of what we're doing here." As soon as he said it, he knew it was a mistake; he saw the stony expressions settle on their faces, and he could feel the hostility.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An aide stepped to his side and said to him, "We're ready, Doctor."

Glad to get away from the tenseness he had created, Blakeman said, "Please follow me. I must ask that you stay in one group. Some of the areas may be in use for tranquilization."

"Oh, dangerous?" said Senator Reardon. "I thought everything was smooth as silk here. Now you admit it's dangerous."

Blakeman frowned and started to snap a reply, but his aide spoke up softly, "It is important to keep in mind that this is a criminal rehabilitation center, mostly for people who have committed murder in the heat of passion. Yet we need none of the normal safeguards like high walls, barred windows, or armed guards. We do it all with medication. Some of the areas are medication centers, but there is nothing to indicate it. That's why we are careful during a tour."

Blakeman led them through a double door and said, "This is the reception area where incoming patients are first interviewed. Note the absence of desks, or of any appearance of a doctor's office. We try to make it look like a comfortable living room."

"By any chance," Doctor Callahan asked, "is this one of those medication centers you mentioned a moment ago?"

The aide said, "Yes, it is. We administer incipient medication here in the form of an odorless gas. It is piped in in controlled amounts through those small holes you see in the ceiling, along with conditioned air. It imparts only a mild euphoria. The attending physician goes through it, too, but he knows it and is perfectly able to carry out his tasks attendant upon admission."

"I don't like this," said Senator Reardon. "How do we know you are not gassing us at this very moment?"

"You don't," Blakeman found himself saying. "But it would not harm you. After all, we would be getting it too."

One of the TV people said, "Let's get out of here. What's the next thing?"

Blakeman nodded and led them into a large room with screens around the walls. "The next step after admission is to assign the patient to a room. That is where his medication is increased and . . ."

"Just a minute." It was the sociologist again, Doctor Oberton. "Just what do you look for in your so-called admission interview? What are your criteria for admission?"

"That's mostly done before the patient gets here. We merely check. We take patients, normally, who have committed only one violent major crime; we don't take the habitual criminal type,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

although modifications of the Tinkerton system may soon help them, too. We take the patient who already has at least some feelings of guilt about his crime. And that's most of them, by the way. For instance, here," he touched a button and a screen lighted to show a man sitting in an easy chair in a comfortable room, "is our latest patient."

The group leaned to see the screen, and Judge Bonadio said, "Why, that's Francis Herdliy." In awe now, the group stared at the image of the man so recently convicted of the slow butchery of a neighbor's daughter.

The aide explained. "He's under sedation. The trankton gas is used in heavier concentrations in his room. His mind is . . . tranquil. He's not thinking of much of anything. His thoughts have little content, at the moment."

Senator Reardon angrily snapped, "You've drained his mind, you mean. You've turned him into a vegetable. That's a terrible thing to do to a human being. Far better if you put him to death, the way you should. Turn that off. It's disgusting."

The others in the group stirred restlessly, muttering, and Doctor Oberton said, "Turn on some of these other screens. I want to see if they all look like that."

Blakeman touched button after button, and the respective screens showed the patients sitting in their comfortable chairs, simply staring, a striking sameness about all of them. "Mindless vegetables," snapped the judge. Murmurs arose. "Disgusting." "Affront to human dignity." "I knew it."

The aide said, "They are now simply resting from their last experience, getting ready for the next. This period of tranquillity is necessary. As time goes on, we lessen the concentration of the trankton gas for each patient, and this allows him to reflect a little more on his most recent experience. That's what builds up the repugnance against his individual crime. You see, the very heart of the Tinkerton system is that it treats each patient as a separate individual and thus guides him to undergo individual treatment. His own crime constitutes his own punishment, so to speak. So we . . ."

"This gas, this trankton, you use," said Doctor Bellingham, "Is it poisonous?"

"Oh, no. Not in the concentrations we use."

"But you use it in different concentrations."

"Oh, yes. That's how we control the depth of response."

"Is it poisonous in high concentration?"

"Oh, well, anything is a poison in high enough . . ."

"Don't play with me. Will it kill in reasonably high concentration?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well . . ."

"Will it?"

"Yes."

The group members looked at each other significantly, and Blakeman said, "The trankton simply puts the patient in a tractable and suggestive state. Later on, when we give him the neoethidine, he undergoes his experience. That's when . . ."

"But you're using poison gas on these people," said Doctor Bellingham.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," said Blakeman. "You are exhaling a 'poison gas' right now. Carbon dioxide is poisonous at a concentration of about ten percent."

"You're playing with me again, Doctor Blakeman, and I don't like it. Let's get on with the tour. I want to see the rest of this institution."

Blakeman turned quickly and led the way to the game room. The supervisor there explained that the patients' responses to games and puzzles were a measure of the depth of trankton control. They went to the exercise rooms, the eating rooms, the shower rooms, the TV rooms, and the reading rooms. Then they went to the experience wing.

"These rooms, as you can see, are padded. But merely as a precautionary measure; we have never had a patient go through an overtly violent experience. It is all mental. Our psychiatrists first talk to the patient to insure his mood is right. Then they give him the neoethidine. The effect lasts about an hour, after which the patient returns to his room. That's all there is to it."

Blakeman's last remark trailed off to a deep silence, and he wished he had not added it; both the aide and the supervisor had glanced at him as he made it.

Senator Reardon said slowly, "Suppose you tell us about this 'experience.'"

Blakeman nodded to the supervisor, who said, "The patient hallucinates. He relives his crime, every detail of it, as if it were actually happening. Time is accelerated so that he relives the whole thing in about three quarters of an hour, although it seems to him to take whatever period of time it took in the first place."

"What is the point of all this?" Doctor Callahan's voice was shrill.

The supervisor, startled, just looked at her; so Blakeman said, "After the patient relives his experience often enough, he becomes repelled by it. In fact, he becomes repelled by all violence. In this way he is permanently rehabilitated."

Congressman Carter said, "That's the most terrible thing I've ever heard."

Blakeman said, "Do you have any idea what the successful rate of rehabilitation is using any other method?" He quickly went on.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Almost zero for this type of criminal. Jails and hospitals succeed only in making hardened criminals out of them. We have one hundred percent success with the Tinkerton system."

The group did not really hear him. They stood subdued, shaking their heads to their own thoughts. Congressman Carter said, "How many times do you make them take a trip?"

The supervisor said stiffly, "We do not refer to the experience as a 'trip.'"

"I don't care what you call it, it's a trip with a hallucinogenic drug just like any other—no different than LSD. But my question was, how many trips do they take?"

The supervisor said, "They take four experiences a day."

"Four a day." The heads of the group members came up, the mouths open, the eyes staring. "Terrible." "Burns their brains out." "Medieval." "Preposterous."

Blakeman held up his hand. "Please, gentlemen. And ladies. These patients relive their crime four times a day on an accelerated basis. In two weeks to three months they are rehabilitated, completely. No harm is done to them. Neither the trankton nor the neoethidine harms them in any way. Their intelligence remains unaltered. Their skills and training remain intact. They may . . ."

"This neoethidine," said Senator Reardon. "Is it a poison, too?"

Blakeman said, "You use the word 'too' to be provocative, I assume. It is not a poison. It has no side effects whatever. Oh, there's a loud clanging in the ears shortly after the dose is taken, but that completely disappears in a few seconds."

Doctor Oberton shook a finger at him and said, "Doesn't that 'loud clanging in the ears' signify brain damage?"

"Certainly not. Not in this case. It is simply a brief and harmless manifestation of the psychotomimetic drug."

The group members were restless. Some were again muttering to themselves, and Senator Reardon and Judge Bonadio were talking quietly together. Blakeman started to speak to them, but another aide came up to him and said to him aside, "Telephone, sir. The president."

Blakeman, surprised, asked him to repeat it, and then he said to the group, "Excuse me for a few moments. Some urgent business has come up." He turned to go.

"Just a minute, Blakeman." It was Senator Reardon. "You have no more urgent business anywhere than right here, believe me. We have some questions that . . ."

"Ask them of my assistants. I will be back directly." As he walked out, several of the group demanded that he stay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He touched the button in his office and said, "Yes, Mr. President."

The familiar face looked at him, and the president said, "How is the tour going, Doctor Blakeman?"

Blakeman shook his head. "Not very well, sir. I'm afraid they are all bitterly hostile, and I can see now that they came here with their minds made up, and there is little I will be able to do to change them. They don't really hear what we tell them."

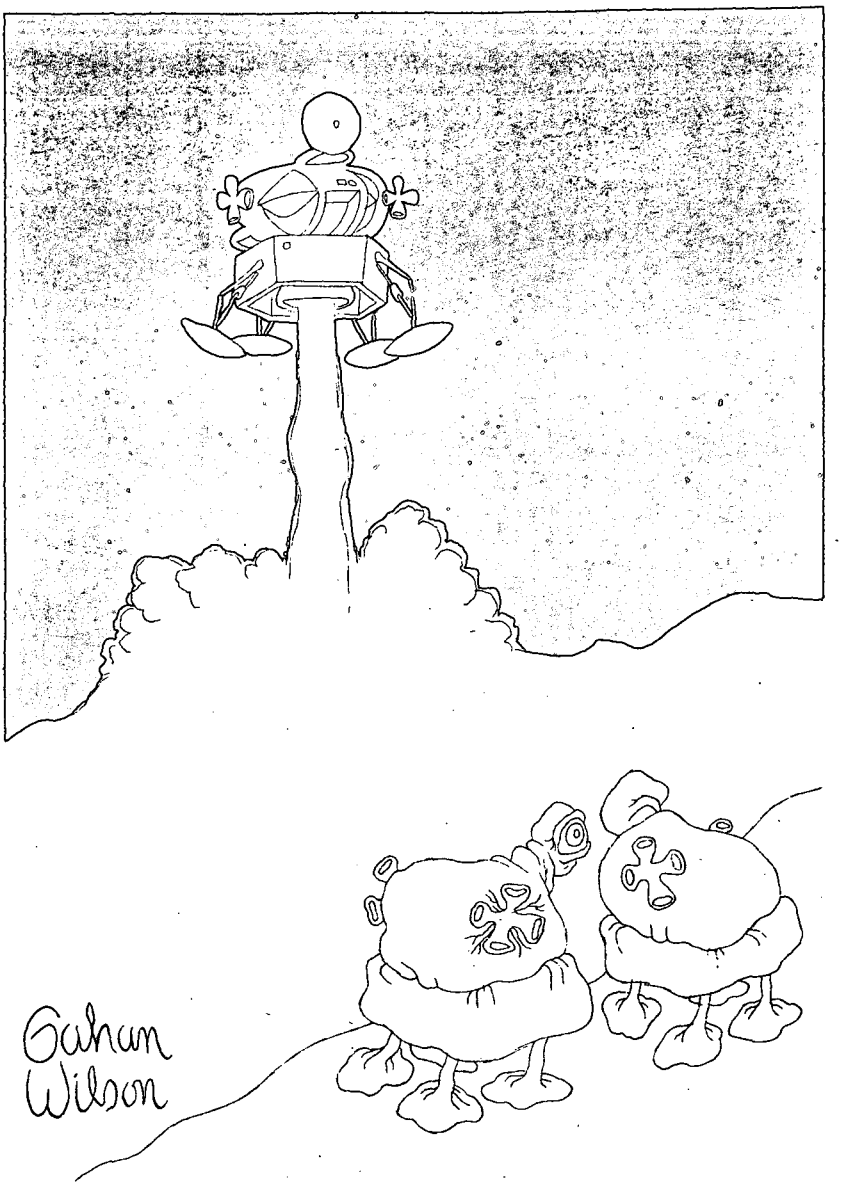
The president nodded and said, "Well, I'm sorry to hear that. With all the drug problems of our young people throughout the country, I'm afraid that an unfavorable report from that group will influence enough of our older voters to tip the scales. Well, I guess there's nothing *you* can do about it. Thank you, Doctor Blakeman." The screen went blank.

Blakeman watched the image of that sad face fade from the screen, and unexpectedly, out of the past, the image of another face rose before him—another face, but with the same mournful eyes, the same hurt look. Blakeman stared at the ghostly image that swam before him, and he caught his breath and felt his throat tighten and close. How many years had it been? His father had made a simple request: "Son, I need your help at the store tomorrow." But the young Blakeman had been too busy, and he had curtly refused. As his father turned away, the thrombosis struck. His father fell dead with that hurt look still on his face. The same hurt look that faded now from the screen.

Blakeman fought for breath and pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes. *This time he would help.* He straightened and breathed deep and walked down the hall to rejoin the tour.

He stopped outside the glass-paneled door that separated him from the room where the tour members were now loudly arguing. He reached for the trankton control panel on the wall in front of him and ripped off the safety. With his hand on the flow control knob he looked in again at his supervisor and his aide, in there with the rest of them, and he hesitated. They, too, would die. Yet the sacrifice would not be too great; dedicated men had laid down their lives before. For an additional moment he hesitated, long enough to shake off the loud clanging in his ears, and then he turned the knob as far as it would go.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Dosen't look like such a bad sort."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Poul Anderson: TAU ZERO. Doubleday, 1970. 208 pp., boards, $4.95

This is the ultimate "hard science-fiction" novel. Everybody else who has been trying to write this kind of thing can now fold up his tent and creep silently away.

The scientific problem is deceptively simple: What happens when an interstellar vessel, accelerating at a steady one gravity, is damaged in such a way that it can't stop doing so? Furthermore, no violation of relativity is allowed—no passing the speed of light—and the technologies described must all be achievable from scientific knowledge as of 1967 (when this novel, abridged, first saw magazine publication).

Stated this baldly, the idea looks too confining to be worth a short story, let alone a novel. We have all been educated so thoroughly in the vastness of the distances between stars that one G of acceleration sounds like the veriest crawl; and in any event, a ship limited to sub-light velocities couldn't get very far in any useful period of time, could it?

Well, a little simple doodling with the basic equations of motion will show that at one G, an object can attain 99 per cent of the speed of light in less than a year. And as for "useful" time—if you are talking about the people on shipboard, they become subject to the Lorenz-Fitzgerald effect, which means that shipboard time becomes slower and slower than Earth time.

The eventual consequences of this seemingly modest and constricting set of assumptions are so staggering as to make the intergalactic epic of E. E. Smith, Ph.D. (who made up all his "science") seem in retrospect like a trip with mommy to the corner grocer. They lead, for example, to passages like this:

"The ship quivered. Weight grabbed at Reymont. He barely avoided falling to the deck. A metal noise toned through the hull, like a basso profundo gong. It was soon over. Free flight resumed. *Leonara Christine* had gone through another galaxy."

It has become something of a joke to call a science-fiction story mind-boggling, but if that para-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graph doesn't boggle you, you're unbogglable. It occurs on page 179, and what Anderson has waiting for you in the remaining pages strikes me as the second biggest boggler conceivable by the human mind.

The biggest, by far, is the one that hits you after you close the book, and it is this: *It is almost all completely possible.* Only at the very end does the author pull a rabbit out of his hat, and it seems like a rabbit *only* because of the scrupulosity of the rest of his argument: He makes two cosmological assumptions, one of which is in good odor among many reputable astrophysicists, the other a conjecture which, to say the worst of it, nobody is ever likely to prove wrong.

Anderson has not failed to populate his starship with interesting people with complex human problems, and the hero, the above-mentioned Reymont, is especially well realized. There are many moments of genuine emotion (as well as a few of facile tear-jerking). But nobody but a Dostoevsky could have given this novel a cast that would not be overshadowed by the grandeur of its events. Its flaws are mostly the consequences of its strengths. Overall, it is a monument to what a born novelist and poet can do with authentic scientific materials. And as is usual with recent Anderson, the poet is as important as the novelist; for an example, after you have finished the novel, look back at its very first line.

James Cooke Brown: THE TROIKA INCIDENT. Doubleday, 1970. 399 pp., boards, $7.95

By sheer coincidence, this book also invokes a runaway spacedrive and the Lorenz-Fitzgerald effect, but only as an excuse to get three astronauts a hundred years into the future, from when they are returned by time machine. It is also, by inversion, an object lesson in how essential the fiction part of science fiction is; for although the flap copy calls it "a futuristic novel," it contains little characterization, less action, no conflict and no plot. Though most of the material in it (except for most of the ideas) is necessarily the author's invention, it is a long distance away from being a novel or even a story.

Essentially, the astronauts found a Utopia in 2070, and from page 29 to the end, they take turns describing in great detail every important aspect of it. The author is widely read in many disciplines, so his explanations of why such-and-such institutions will arise or disappear are almost always convincing; he lost me, at any rate, only in his early optimism on the non-occurrence of World War III and the population explosion. And because he is in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tensely convinced of the need for cultural diversity, his is the only Utopia I have ever read about that didn't strike me as being actually a pretty good description of Hell.

He is nakedly out to persuade the reader to help move events in this direction, and I wish him luck. I can't help wondering if 370 type-packed pages of Platonic dialogue was the best choice of instrument; but perhaps anyone who would find the book a bore wouldn't be a good instrument either. Try it, by all means—but don't expect drama. Nobody *but* Plato ever managed to inject any drama into this kind of argument.

L. P. Davies: GENESIS TWO. Doubleday, 1970. 191 pp., boards, $4.85

This seems to have been time-travel month at Doubleday. In this handling, a tiny, dying English village is planted in a volcanic jungle 40,000 years hence, to start the human race over again after a man-made catastrophe has wiped it out. This time, there are to be two Adams, two Eves, and five supernumeraries. One of the supers is murdered, two commit a sort of indirect suicide, and two are returned to the present to tell the tale.

The villagers, a variegated group of eccentric die-hards, are well struck off; Davies has some lovely ideas about the flora of the future (my favorite being a tree that propagates by Montgolfier balloon); narrative style and dialogue are competent. Yet somehow I failed to find much interest in the proceedings. The science content is nearly invisible, and the characters' responses to the Crusoesque situation are a long way from being inventive.

There are several inconsistencies, too. For example, the disaster that occurred in about 5016 is said to "burn up the atmosphere, destroy all living matter, roll up the earth's surface" and reach so deep that it would be useless to dig shelters, no matter how far down. Yet later we are told several times that the vegetation the time-travellers find must have sprung from pre-catastrophe seeds that had survived by being stuck in crannies or buried in mud!

It is also stated that all this had happened once before, and that our present Adam-and-Eve story is the record of it. This assumption is inessential to the story, and furthermore, incredible, since Genesis is by no means the oldest book in the Hebrew bible, and the origin and evolution of the two creation stories it contains are historically well established.

Better wait for the paperback.

L. Sprague de Camp, ed.: WARLOCKS AND WARRIORS. Putnam, 1970. 255 pp., boards, $4.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The title of this anthology (the first of its kind in hard covers) is self-explanatory. All the stories are reprints, but from the unusually detailed credits given, it can be established that the majority will nevertheless be new to most readers. For example, of the ten, two appeared only in AMRA, a magazine with a circulation somewhere around 1,500; two are reprinted for the first time since their original appearances in 1912 and 1938; three more have been reprinted previously only by small, specialized fantasy publishing houses. Of the remaining three, one is modern, and the other two have been reprinted before in widely available collections—one of them too recently to have made this indicia. I wish all editors and publishers were as careful as this about such lists.

With the exceptions of Cabell, de Camp himself and Eddison, sword-and-sorcery generally leaves me not only unmoved but even unentertained; the main ingredients are standard and the level of minor invention low. For those who love it, however, the list of authors represented here (as well as the facts above) should be 80/90 per cent reassuring: Ray Capella, Lin Carter, Robert E. Howard, Kenry Kuttner, Fritz Leiber, C. L. Moore, Lord Dunsany, Clark Ashton Smith, H. G. Wells and Roger Zelazny.

The introduction and blurbs are models of how such things ought to be done. Furthermore, some uncredited and unsigned artist—could it be the editor?—has done fine maps for each of the six stories which take place in imaginary lands. All in all, both an unusual assemblage for addicts, and a good sampler for newcomers. That thud you hear is the reviewer falling between two stools.

Robert A. Heinlein: I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. Putnam's, 1970. 401 pp., boards, $6.95

To put the matter tersely and brutally, the new Heinlein novel is a bore. It wouldn't surprise me if he got a fifth Hugo for it, but if that happens, the applause will be for the writer he was, not for this performance. Here, the Master has even forgotten to tell a story.

The opening proposition is interesting: A dying billionaire buys himself a brain transplant, but because he has a rare blood type, winds up in the body of a young woman. The remainder of the book is devoted—grimly—to the brain's learning to adapt to, and eventually enjoy, what it is like to be what Heinlein thinks the ideal woman is like. The joys involved consist almost entirely of every form of sexual promiscuity except sodomy and pederasty.

This description may make the novel sound like it might at least be a good dirty book, but it isn't.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nothing happens on stage; the characters simply talk about it. My God, how they talk! In 10 random cuts down through this thick book, I found only one page of the 20 involved that wasn't *solid* conversation. It evidently would surprise the author, but probably no one else over the age of 20, that they furthermore have nothing to say about Topic A that wasn't being said in college bull-sessions in 1938 (and probably long before).

When the conversations aren't external, there are internal ones going on, for though the female host-body's brain was destroyed before the male brain was put into it, he finds that her psyche, personality, ego or what-you-will is still there. And *they* talk and talk and talk, inside parentheses, which grammatical sign almost outdoes the letter "e" in popularity in this text. Had I not undertaken to review the novel, I should never have gotten to the end of it except for curiosity as to how Heinlein was going to explain the girl's survival. The only explanation, as it turned out, is on page 107, and it goes like this:

"(. . . Eunice, you're out of your mind!)

"(Impossible, dear; I don't have one to be out of . . .)"

The potentially interesting question of legal identity in such a transplant case might have provided some suspense, but it is effectively sidestepped: Though there are several brief court scenes purporting to deal with this, Heinlein has made the adversaries blatantly stupid, and the judge transparently on the hero/heroine's side throughout. The only other suspense revolves around the question: When is the hero/heroine going to get laid? This happens on page 258, all the possibilities for titillation having been exhausted about 150 pages earlier. All the rest of the sex up to this point has been reminiscence, except for kissing.

It is possible that the fairly complex net of personal relationships Heinlein has created might have sustained a novel half this size. But I am inclined to doubt even that, for though the protagonist delivers several lectures on the limitations of being, in John Brunner's phrase, totally rich, at almost every point of possible difficulty he/she resorts to some form of bribery. Even the book's central prayer is referred to as the "Money Hum." The pun, you clods, is on "Om Mani Padme Hum," and the view the novel takes of the usefulness and nature of Yoga more generally is on the same level.

A number of chapters are introduced by samples of the news of the day at the time, all of which I found both pointed and funny, and quite up to the best level of earlier Heinlein. What he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lets you see of the outside world in other places, plus the news samples, adds up to a set of preconditions for THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, and this is interesting, too . . . but there's very little of it.

The novel further intensifies my suspicions, first aroused by STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, of the tone of authority Heinlein adopts about everything which falls inside a field in which I am not myself competent. For example, one of his best minor characters here is a painter, and though the portrait convinces me, I know nothing about the subject, despite being married to an artist. But the given names of his billionaire are Johann Sebastian Bach, and he is said to be competent enough to play Dvorak's Slavonic Dance #10 (a minor orchestral composition) on the piano; yet at a formal wedding he identifies the opening ("Here comes the bride") march as "Mendelssohn's 'Processional'." Could a musician's ignorance go farther than that?*

Well, even great Homer sometimes nods, and Shakespeare wrote more than one bad play. Let us hope that with this immense yawn of a book, Heinlein has worn out his belated discovery of sex as subject-matter, and will get back—as he did in THE MOON . . .—to science fiction, which he once wrote better than anybody since H. G. Wells. Would anyone care to bet that he won't? Not I.

—JAMES BLISH

**The piece in question is the wedding chorus from the second act of Wagner's* Lohengrin. *A Mendelssohn piece* ends *the traditional ceremony, but it is not a "Processional," but the wedding march for M's incidental music for* A Midsummer Night's Dream.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS ON THE MOVE

Will you put yourself in the place of a copy of F&SF for a moment? A copy that is mailed to your home, only to find that you have moved. Is it forwarded to you? *No.* Is it returned to us? *No.* Instead, a post office regulation decrees that it must be . . . thrown away! We are notified of this grim procedure and charged ten cents for each notification. Multiply this aimless ending by hundreds each month and we have a doubly sad story: copies that do nobody any good, and a considerable waste of money to us, money which we would much prefer to spend on new stories. With your help, this situation can be changed. *If you are planning a change of address, please notify us six weeks in advance. If possible, enclose a label from a recent issue, and be sure to give us both your old and new address, including the zip codes.*

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE, MERCURY PRESS, Inc., P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The author of this thoughtful and suspenseful story about time travel writes that he is "thirty years old and divide my time between writing and special education (I direct and teach a program for educable mentally retarded children). My fiction has appeared (or is scheduled to appear) in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, Galaxy *and various literary magazines."*

THE SUN POND

by George C. Chesbro

THE PNEUMOPANEL SIGHED open and Blu was momentarily startled to find himself face to face with the Chairman of the Department. Blu began his formal greeting sign but stopped when the Chairman reached out and gripped his shoulder.

This was Blu's first indication that the trouble was serious. That simple act of touching would have been a completely natural gesture of friendship if Blu had been an Undergraduate. But he was not an Undergraduate, not any longer. Now he was Guardian, and no man held more respect for that office than the Chairman.

"Ab Nor is dead," the old man said softly.

Blu stiffened to rigid attention and tried to mask his shock by concentrating on the ball of molten metal growing in his belly. But he knew it was no good; the Chairman's gaze was relentless, and Blu sensed that his own emotions were marching across the surface of his eyes like images on a VisoPanel.

"Sir, I don't see how that's possible. She just—"

"Sit down, Blu."

Blu numbly did as he was told. The muscles in his face had turned to clay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You loved her, didn't you?"

"Sir, I don't understand how such a thing could have happened."

"Answer my question, Blu," the Chairman said. His tone was gentle but left no doubt that an answer was expected.

"I am Guardian," Blu said, looking directly at the Chairman. "I am allowed no love, as I am allowed no past and no future."

"But this is the present, and being Guardian does not exempt you from the human race. You have the same emotions and desires as anyone else." The Chairman paused, then sat down across from Blu and folded his hands in his lap. "I am suggesting that had you not been chosen as Guardian you would have offered Ab Nor One Life. Is that true?"

"It is an intensely personal question, sir," Blu said very softly.

"I know. I am not questioning the Guardian, but a former student, the brightest I have ever worked with—and my favorite."

"It is true, sir," Blu said evenly. "Were I not Guardian, I would have offered Ab Nor One Life."

The Chairman nodded, acknowledging the price both of them had paid for the question and the answer.

"Thank you, Blu. Now, please tell me everything you know of Ab Nor and her work."

"Except for myself, she was the youngest student ever cleared by the University for Projected Direct Research."

"You cleared her personally?"

Blu nodded. He felt numb.

"Because of her age, I conducted all of the tests myself. Her Readiness Quotient and Psychotapes—"

"I'm not questioning your judgment, Blu. The fact is that Ab Nor was dead on Retraction. That is theoretically impossible, and Compucenter has been unable to come up with any explanation. I must know everything about her work."

"She was trying to verify the existence of the Leif Erikson colony in Ancient Maraki," Blu said, studying the palms of his hands. "This Projection was to be to Old Earth Time One Thousand Four. I have the exact coordinates in my log."

"N-Dimension?"

"Yes. Costuming and dialect were no problem, but the small size of the colony would have made direct contact unfeasible." Blu looked up at the Chairman. "As you said, sir, Projection theory rules out the possibility of death in N-Dimension."

The Chairman rose and walked across the room to the main VisoPanel.

"Not only that, Compucenter indicates there was no Projector malfunction." The Chairman activated the panel. "Come here, Blu. I'd like you to see something."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Blu went to stand beside the Chairman. The image on the panel flickered for a moment, long enough for Blu to steel himself for what he knew he would see.

Ab Nor's sightless eyes stared up through the transparent shell of the Quarantube in which her body had been sealed. Even in death, Ab Nor's beauty—her presence—washed over Blu, reached down into a part of him he knew he could allow no one to touch.

How? Blu thought. There was no way. No way.

The Chairman pushed a button and the midportion of Ab Nor's body ballooned into full magnification. Blu stared for a few moments at the stone Ab Nor held in her hands, then stepped closer to the screen.

"There's no use trying to identify it," the Chairman said. "That stone simply doesn't exist. It never has, and—as far as the Chemistry and Geology Departments are concerned—never will. It's a conglomerate made up of minerals that simply do not fuse, at least not in this world." The Chairman shut off the panel and turned to face Blu. "We must find out what happened; we must discover where Ab Nor found that stone and how she died."

"I understand, sir. I'm ready to go immediately."

"First, there is something I must say."

Blu stiffened. There was an edge to the Chairman's voice that made him uncomfortable.

"I'll be frank with you," the Chairman continued. "The Senior Professors felt one of the Trainees should be sent in your place. I overruled them."

"I am Guardian," Blu said simply. "And this is a very unusual case."

"And you, by your own admission, are emotionally involved with the researcher. The temptation to interfere might be great."

Blu felt his mouth go dry. Not trusting himself to speak, he stood very straight and stared into the Chairman's eyes.

"I know," the Chairman said with the slightest trace of pride. "I know that you would die before you would commit an act of Interference, even if that act meant saving the life of the woman you loved. That's why I overruled the Senior Professors."

"Thank you, sir," Blu said tightly. "I was not aware that anyone knew."

"Ab Nor knew," the Chairman said, smiling gently. "It made her very uncomfortable, being loved by the Guardian. Even if that love was shared."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Don't apologize for something beyond your control. Your capacity for self-discipline is one of the reasons you were selected Guardian. In any event, you will be projected onto a different Tan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gential Plane; you and Ab Nor will not exist together. In other words, you will be forced to watch Ab Nor die, then report the circumstances to us. If any Alteration is called for, it will be the decision of the University."

"I understand, sir."

"Blu, would you have wanted us to send another in your place?"

"No, sir. I am Guardian. It is my responsibility."

Once again, the Chairman reached out and touched Blu.

"Yes, you are Guardian. And I made an excellent choice."

It was wrong from the beginning, searing pain when there should have been no sensation, gravity where there should have been complete weightlessness. There was one brief instant when a blinding flash behind his eyes tore at his nerve endings, a shrieking thunder in his ears, then silence.

Blu opened his eyes and blinked in disbelief. Wherever he was, it was not O.E.T. 1004; the air was too dry and seemed to have a high ozone content. Fighting off a terrible weariness, Blu rolled over on his side and looked around him. He should have been Projected somewhere over the southern coast of Maraki and should be looking down on land and water; he should be without any physial sensation. Instead, he appeared to be on solid ground, or rather some kind of *matter* that was supporting him but was spongy to direct touch. He was surrounded by a mucus-like fog in which moved dark shapes, structures that might be buildings or clouds or animals or mountains or all at once. Or nothing. There was no sky, only the mist, and a horizon the distance of his outstretched arm.

A world gone mad.

Or was it his mind? He was so *tired*.

He rose to his feet and stood among the moving shapes. The only explanation he could think of was Projector malfunction, and Compucenter had said no. Also, he had *seen* Ab Nor's body; had dissembling occurred, there would have been no Retraction.

Blu suddenly experienced an odd sensation of *sinking*. He leaped back, then looked down at his feet; there was no ground, no soil to sink into, only the same murky fog that surrounded him. And now he was aware of sounds. Strange sounds, running water that was not water, cries of beasts unlike any he had ever heard of or studied.

And Ab Nor was nowhere to be seen. Since he had been Projected on identical coordinates, on a higher Tangential Plane, she, at least, should be visible to him.

He began to walk, blindly shoving one foot in front of the other. He stopped often to rest, then dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

covered through the altered positions of his limbs that he had been sleeping. Once he imagined himself descending a steep slope while the shapes grew clearer, more solid.

Then, once again, he had to rest.

Someone was calling his name, the bell-shaped tones of a woman's voice pealed somewhere in the distant reaches of his mind; the sound of his name rang, echoed, washed over him like waves on a shore. Slowly, Blu clawed his way to consciousness.

Ab Nor was standing over him, pulling at his arm.

"Blu! Thank One you're all right! Hurry, we have to leave this place!"

Blu lay perfectly still watching her, waiting for what he was convinced must be an apparition to disappear. By all the laws of Tangential Projection Ab Nor should not be where she seemed to be; she should not be able to see or touch him.

"*Hurry,* Blu!"

"Ab Nor?"

The woman lifted one corner of her mouth in a smile that only Ab Nor could produce.

"Who else around here do you suppose would know your name?" Her smile faded. "We really must leave here. This is a bad place."

Still struck mute by questions, Blu stood up and allowed himself to be dragged by the hand further down the slope. It was as he had experienced it before; the blurred shapes coalesced into trees and hills, streams and rivers. At the same time his weariness ebbed and his mind began to clear.

His first thought came with the impact of a blow; his presence and Ab Nor's had converged. Now, regardless of what he did or did not do, nothing that had happened before would be the same. The series of events leading to Ab Nor's death would be inalterably changed by the mere fact of his presence; he was a new link in the historical chain.

Somehow, in a way he did not understand, he had Interfered.

Ab Nor led him down onto a flat plain, then into a clearing before a huge forest that extended in all directions as far as Blu could see. Here, on the plain, things seemed the same. At first glance. Only after Blu had studied his surroundings for some time did he realize that everything in this world was different, different at times by only slight degrees, but different nonetheless. Whatever this place was, it was not Earth.

Ab Nor was staring at him. Suddenly, Blu felt weak.

"I've never been so glad to see anybody in my life," Ab Nor said, lifting the corner of her mouth.

Blu said nothing.

"I understand. You're not sure I'm real."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're obviously real," Blu said curtly. "What I'm trying to understand is how our presences merged. I'm supposed to be on a different Tangential Plane. I fixed the coordinates myself."

Ab Nor looked away, but not before Blu had seen her eyes cloud.

"I see," the woman said, throwing her head back. "You're not here because you calculated this place. You're here because something . . . happened. Now you've Interfered. That's why you're looking at me that way."

If the Interference any longer made any difference, Blu thought. And he was no longer convinced it did. A Time Ripple or a dangerous Warp could only come about as a result of Interference on Earth. In any case, his own Erasure would not cause a Warp, and Ab Nor's past had been carefully adjusted before she was even allowed into the Direct Research program. Here, in this place, what they did could not seemingly affect others.

For the first time, Blu allowed himself to consider the possibility that Ab Nor could live. Or, he could die. Immediately, he channeled his thoughts to known data.

Ab Nor had been dead on Retraction, and this was theoretically impossible in N-Dimension. But the answer to that was clear; this was not N-Dimension, or any other Tangential Dimension known to the scientists at the University. Now, one of two things would most likely occur; he would meet the same fate, or he would find a way to Retract both of them successfully. In the event both of them died, the chances were that the Projected Direct Research program could be shut down indefinitely while the University explored the problem and searched for a solution that might not exist. If he could not find a way back, there seemed a very good chance that the History Department at the University would be forced to revert to the methods used by the Ancients.

"I don't suppose you could tell me what happened?"

There was the slightest trace of sarcasm in Ab Nor's voice. Blu glanced up at her, attempting to mask his own emotions and, at the same time, to gauge her mental state. Some plan would have to be formulated, and he knew he would need Ab Nor's help.

"You were dead on Retraction," Blu said tersely.

"Well, well," Ab Nor sighed, her eyes betraying only a slight flicker of emotion. "I can't say that's a very comforting thought."

At that moment, Blu wanted nothing so much as to reach out and touch her, draw her into his arms, and comfort her. He put his hands behind his back.

"You were holding something—a rock. Compucenter de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

termined that it was a conglomerate that does not exist on Earth."

"I imagine I must have picked it up over there," Ab Nor said, pointing to the west. "There's a whole field of strange rocks. I must have felt Retraction coming and picked up the rock hoping to give the University some clue as to where I'd been."

"Then we are still within Retraction coordinates?"

Ab Nor shrugged.

"I don't know. I'm only guessing that I would have been over there at Retraction. I may have picked up the rock and carried it around with me. I have been going back and forth to the plateau."

"You mean where you found me?"

"Yes. I never went all the way back, just to the edge. That was where I first materialized. I kept falling asleep, until I finally found my way down here. I go back because I don't want to miss Retraction Time."

"You couldn't mark Retraction Time on your calculator?"

"It doesn't work."

Blu glanced down at his own instrument belt. It was true; his own calculator had stopped at the precise moment of Projection.

Blu picked up a tiny pebble and hurled it into a nearby stream. The stone sliced into the viscous liquid with a sound like a chiming bell.

"Tell me everything that you've experienced since you've been here," Blu said, squatting down on the ground.

Ab Nor sat down beside him.

"Well, you know I was trying to find Leif Erikson's colony in Maraki. The last two times I'd thought I'd found traces, but I wasn't sure. You don't have too much mobility in N-Dimension. This time, I thought I had it. I made a few adjustments in my Projection coordinates and . . . well, here we are."

Ab Nor smiled at Blu who looked away. Her easy manner—her complete trust in his abilities—grated on his nerves. At the same time he knew that this was one of the things that made him love her; she had great courage.

"Anyway, that's about it," Ab Nor continued. "I haven't been here that long, just long enough to discover that this is a very strange place."

"How so? Give me your own impressions."

"There are . . . *things* here," Ab Nor said, frowning in concentration. "Things I've only glimpsed. The *quality* of this world is almost the same as Earth. *Almost* the same, but always a little different. It's as if . . . as if . . . I don't know."

"What were you going to say?"

"It's as if, well, everything in this place were an evolutionary discard. Plants, rocks, even ani-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mals that *almost* happened, could have evolved, but didn't. I know it sounds crazy but that's my impression."

"Animals?"

"Oh, yes. We've got the whole zoo here, from the beginning of Time. But they're like everything else. Have you ever seen a *Brontosaurus* with an armor plate? I saw one the other day."

"You're sure? I mean, you didn't imagine it?"

"A little while before you came I was chased up a tree by a lion with cloven hoofs. He was real; I could smell him. I'm not sure he would have killed me; I haven't seen any signs of death in this place. But he left no doubt that he was going to give it a try. I haven't been back in the forest since."

"How far does all this go?"

"It's hard to say. As you can see, the forest stretches in both directions from east to west. It may go on forever. Back of us is the plateau. Over there, past that hill, the solid ground ends at the Sun Pond."

Blu glanced along the direction of Ab Nor's pointing finger.

"The Sun Pond?"

"I'm sorry. I guess I should have mentioned that at the beginning. It's just that *everything* here is so—"

"Tell me what it is."

"I don't know what it is," Ab Nor said curtly, obviously injured by Blu's tone. "The land ends in a steep cliff and the Sun Pond is below. It's more like an ocean than a pond. A great, yellow-white ocean. You can feel its heat and *hear* it roar. You look down into it and you can see things moving—like up on the plateau. I call it the Sun Pond because it's what I imagine the sun's surface would look like up close, assuming you could get that close to it."

Blu abruptly rose to his feet.

"Take me to it."

It was as Ab Nor had described it, an ocean; the surface of the sun, bubbling and iridescent, shifting, silent one moment, roaring the next. Far beneath the translucent surface, Blu imagined he could see dark shapes moving. Covering it all, impregnating the atmosphere, was a wall of white, shimmering heat.

"I can't think of any answer," Blu said, turning away from the heat. "I must go subconscious."

"Not here," Ab Nor said. "It's not safe."

"Why not?"

"The animals. I've seen them grazing near here. I'll take you to a place."

Ab Nor led Blu into one of the caves near the forest's edge. She pulled some brush across the cave's entrance, then turned to find Blu already on his back, his eyes blank as he began the long, precipitous plunge into his inner mind, the storage house of every

LICENSED TO OZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

piece of information, every experience, impressed upon him during his career at the University. Deep in subconscious meditation, Blu would gather together this vast store of knowledge, then bring it into focus on the problem of where they were, and how they came to be here.

Ab Nor sat and folded her arms across her chest. Now, there was nothing left to do but wait for the instructions of the Guardian. She felt very calm, almost apathetic; if she was to die, she would die. No more could be done than was being done. Blu was with her. Blu, the one man above all others the Senior Professors had chosen to protect the past from the future, and to safeguard the researchers who would discover that past through direct observation. Her life was in his hands, or—more precisely—in his mind.

She was happy Blu had come. For the moment, that was enough. She did not allow herself to think of what would happen if Blu could not find an answer.

Somewhere, tens of thousands of years in the future, she was already dead.

Ab Nor had dozed. Now she woke with a start to find Blu standing over her.

"There is no death in N-Dimension," Blu said rapidly. "The signs are missing. You did not die here. Also, you made a conscious effort to bring something back with you; there was no violence; otherwise you would have lost the stone. Therefore, you must have died as a result of the Retraction itself."

"But you said Compucenter indicated there was no Projector malfunction."

"Still, it is possible for Retraction to kill in certain circumstances. For example, Retraction will kill if the force exerted is significantly greater than is needed to Retract an individual from a specific time period. I believe that's what happened. I believe that, somehow, we are very close to our own time. If I'm right, Retraction would be certain to dissemble the life force."

"But what about the Projection?"

"Right now, that's an unknown factor. Any instrument is only as sophisticated as its makers. We're dealing here with something—a new dimension—entirely beyond the boundaries of our research. Actually, we know as much about the *nature* of Time as the Ancients knew about the nature of electricity; very little. Like the Ancients, ignorance of the whole does not prevent us from using what we do know to advance our civilization's body of knowledge."

"But where are we?"

"I don't know. There's nothing in Projection theory to account for a place like this. Therefore, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

answer must lie in the data surrounding the coordinate points that brought us here. In other words, something in Old Earth Time One Thousand Four. I'll need your help. I need to know all there is to know about conditions on Earth at that time, anything that might give the slightest clue as to what happened. We must formulate some kind of hypothesis that we can act from. And we must hurry. We have no way of knowing when Retraction will occur."

"But I can't think of anything."

"It won't be on the surface. If there is anything at all, any kind of clue, it will be deep in your mind; a single fact, a statistic, a unique phenomenon. That's what we're looking for. We must find that piece, then try to fit it into the puzzle." Blu paused and took a deep breath. "There is no time for separate Cognitive Reasoning. We must go subconscious together."

"Then we will become One," Ab Nor said, a flush rising in her cheeks.

"There is no other way," Blu said quietly. "We must merge our store of knowledge as quickly as possible. I'm sorry you must be shamed."

"I will feel no shame," Ab Nor said evenly. "But you—you are Guardian."

Ab Nor began a bow of obeisance. Blu reached out and stopped her.

"There is nothing else to be done," he said, taking the woman's hand and pulling her close to him.

Immediately, Ab Nor pressed her body against his, extending her thoughts to be touched. Blu held her tightly for a moment, then pulled her down beside him on the cave floor.

He hesitated for long moments, conditioning himself to the intense emotional storm coursing through his body, then extended his own consciousness. Ab Nor was waiting for him, open to the depths of her being. Her knowledge was laced with passion, making it easier for him. Their minds touched, then merged making One Life, one consciousness, one love.

And there was no shame for either of them.

It was there; a single piece of information floating up from the vast sea of Ab Nor's knowledge of the time. Blu seized it and sat bolt upright.

"Solar storms!" Blu said, grasping Ab Nor's arm. "It has to be the solar storms!"

Ab Nor's consciousness still clung to his, reluctant to let go, to abandon One Life. Blu gently blocked her off. Ab Nor sighed and sat up beside him. Tears welled in her eyes, then were blinked back.

"I didn't know you felt so strongly, Blu. I didn't know."

Blu grinned wryly.

"Apparently everyone else did.

LICENSED TO UNIVERSAL
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Did you hear what I said before?"

"About the solar storms? I could feel you reacting to that. There was a great deal of solar activity in that year."

"Yes." He looked at her but remembered to veil his eyes. "I think I can save you, and myself in the bargain."

"I wasn't even thinking of that," Ab Nor said softly, dropping her eyes. "I . . . I was thinking of how wonderful it would be if we couldn't go back. I mean, if somehow we could neutralize Retraction and stay here forever."

Blu made a pretense of smoothing the ground before him. He had felt Ab Nor's thought but had not believed she would voice it. Neutralize Retraction; it might be done, with the proper materials, the proper shelter.

But he was Guardian.

"Didn't you see?"

"I didn't understand your thoughts," Ab Nor said, shaking her head. "I'm only a researcher. I don't have your store of knowledge."

"I think that the solar activity somehow affected our Projection in a way that couldn't be recorded on any of the instruments. At that precise moment, in our coordinates, there must have been a tremendous solar flare, and that deflected us."

"Deflected us where?"

"To the shore, the very shallows of time. Somehow—and I'm only theorizing—we tore through the tissue of *real* time, that is time which is real for *us*, the whole strata of time in which things as we know them exist. *Real* time is history, the river we travel through and experience. But this *isn't* any part of our history or Earth's history, as *we* experience it. Here, time is *out of focus*. It's not only a different dimension, it's an entirely different *plane*, a plane of existence that could only be discovered through accident. It may even be the Heaven or Hell the Ancients theorized, then joined with their Godhead. This is a world of half-formed ideas, a world of the *Almost*. Our world is composed of matter and events that *have* come into focus; our world is the center of the sea, the deepest part. We've been swept into the backwaters, and I think I may know how to get back."

"But how?"

Blu took Ab Nor's hand and led her out of the cave.

"I'm not positive," Blu said, breaking into a half trot. "If I'm right, we may live. If I'm wrong, we'll most certainly die. In any case, it will require great courage. And you must trust me."

"I trust you," Ab Nor whispered. "And I love you." But she did not think he had heard her.

"The Sun Pond?"

"Yes," Blu said, gazing down into the depths of the white heat.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"If I'm right, this is the tear in the tissue of Time. This is what we were thrown through. Regardless of what the Projector instruments say, I think our own time is somewhere down-out-there. Perhaps the University itself."

"But even if you're right about our being deflected, why here? Won't we burn up in that heat?"

"The Sun Pond is the only phenomenon in this world that is *significantly* different. Except for the plateau. I felt a flash of heat just before I materialized; the plateau was cold."

Ab Nor clung to Blu's arm and stared down into the Sun Pond.

"You really feel we can get back that way?"

Blu shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a guess, and largely academic. We can't have much time before Retraction. If that comes, we're dead anyway."

"Strange," Ab Nor said, her voice very low. "Actually, I'm already dead, or will be."

This time she held the rest of her thoughts unspoken.

"I love you," Blu said, answering those thoughts. "We have been One, so you already know that. It is true that I am Guardian, and thus it is my duty to attempt to get back. Still, there is something else that you must understand. If trapped here, I believe you are right that we would live forever. Here, alone, in a world that is alien to us. I don't believe human beings were made for that. I don't believe we could live here forever and not end up hating each other. Love itself can never be forever. For myself, I prefer either to die or return to our own world. Even if it means I must always love you only from a distance, knowing we can never again be One."

"You are wise, Blu. That is why you are Guardian. I, too, wish to return. Or die trying."

Blu smiled and would have gone to her except for the sudden, numbing sensation in his arms

FREE: THE BEST FROM F&SF, 13th Series

The subscription coupon on the next page will bring you a free copy of the paperback edition of THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, 13th Series. The book contains more than 250 pages of stories by J. G. Ballard, Jack Vance, Harry Harrison, Richard McKenna, Alfred Bester, Avram Davidson, Zenna Henderson and many others.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and legs, a hollow shriek in his ears. Ab Nor was clutching at her throat and sinking to the ground.

Retraction.

Blu ducked low and swept Ab Nor over his shoulder. The Retraction waves were acting on his whole body now, sucking away his strength, hammering at the cells of his body.

His fingers digging into Ab Nor's flesh, Blu struggled forward to the edge of the cliff and stepped over.

The twin sensations of heat and falling lasted only a brief instant, and then there was only a screaming universe of pain, needles digging into the backs of his eyes, space falling around them. Ab Nor's mind was fully extended, begging for the touch of his. Blu reached out and caressed her thoughts, once again drawing her close and merging into One.

Then it was over, and they were lying together on a field of damp grass.

"Thank you, Blu," Ab Nor whispered in the silence. "You have brought us back, and you have saved my life."

Blu nodded, not trusting himself to speak; he could find no words that would not be embarrassing to them both.

He stared up at the star-spattered sky. Somewhere up there, there was a tear in Time. And the coordinates required to reach it were back at the University. He had discovered an entrance and an exit. He could go back and he knew someday soon he would.

Finally, Blu rose to his feet and began walking toward the lights of the University that glittered in the distance. Ab Nor walked a respectful distance behind.

Mercury Press, Inc., Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

I'm enclosing $7.00 for a one year subscription to The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. Please rush me a free copy of THE BEST FROM F&SF, 13th Series. ☐ new subscription ☐ renewal

3-1

Please print

Name .....

Address .....

City .....State.....Zip #.....

Add 50¢ per year for Canada and Mexico; $1.00 for other foreign countries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Regular readers are familiar with the character of Jose Silvera, the free-lance writer whose credo is: "What does it pay." Here, Silvera agrees to ghost write a series of educational books, beginning with The Machinery Twins Visit A Hot Dog Factory. *If that assignment does not excite you with its dramatic potential, well, it can also be told that Silvera gets rapidly involved with other mysterious and whacky things, such as a group of vigilante assassins whose credo is: "Death to softies."*

THE WAY THINGS WORK

by Ron Goulart

THE TELEPHONE HAD PINK eyes and bunny ears. Jose Silvera jiggled it again, punching at the number keys concealed among the vinyl whiskers. The picscreen in the bunny phone's stomach flashed on once more, and the giant switchboard teddy bear android appeared, saying, "You've already had your phone-a-fairy-tale for today, little boy. Please don't be greedy. Hang up real quick or I'll have to, really, tell Doc Wimby on you."

Silvera, a large wide-shouldered man in his early thirties, dropped the bunny phone back on the pumpkin-shaped phone table. "I'm not a little boy. I'm Jose Silvera, a freelance writer, and I'm here at Doc Wimby's Mechanics Hill School to ghostwrite a series of educational adventure books for children. Right now I'm trying to get a call through to Abandoned City No. 14, to a Miss Willa de Aragon, a lovely and talented writer whom I met recently on the planet Murdstone. It was she, in fact, who held this ghostwriting job here on Jaspar prior to my arrival. Doc Wimby says she gave up the position quite abruptly to go live in an urban commune some hundred miles from here. The phone number of her commune is RAbuja 6-8091."

The mechanical teddy bear sighed. "Oh, very well, you naughty little fellow. Just once more. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don't you snitch to Doc Wimby that I'm spoiling you rotten."

The screen blurred and then an unclish-looking mechanism showed. "Dial-a-fairy-tale No. 106. Brought to you free of charge by Doc Wimby's highly thought-of Mechanics Hill School, grades 1-6 inclusive. The Sleeping Beauty. Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen, who lacked but one thing on earth to make them entirely happy. The king was young, handsome and wealthy; the queen had a nature as good and gentle as . . ."

Silvera hung up by putting the speaker back in the bunny phone's left ear. He got out of the swan boat chair he'd been on the edge of and walked around the room. It was bright noon outside the heart-shaped windows, and he could see tall green trees and rolling hills beyond the rows of fun cottages that immediately surrounded him. He wandered by the pink talk-typewriter Doc Wimby had issued him and bent to look at the unfinished page of the chapter he'd been working on.

"ABC, ABC," said the smooth pink typewriter. "Wouldn't it be fun to learn the alphabet, boys and girls? And what do you think comes first? ABC, ABC. Do you think you can repeat that?"

"I don't know," said Silvera. "What does it pay?" He unplugged the typing machine and moved toward the lace-trimmed doorway.

The bunny phone rang. "This is the phone, boys and girls. It rings like this and when it does it brings you all kinds of news and important messages. Phone. P-h-o-n-e."

Silvera grabbed the speaker out of its ear. "Yes?"

On the screen was a serious-looking and quite long man in a one-piece white suit. He was wearing pale-yellow contact lenses and smoking soy tobacco in a clay pipe. "Well, good morning, Jose. Had your lunch yet?"

"No," answered Silvera. "How do I make an outside call, Doc Wimby?"

Wimby smiled seriously. "Well, Jose, I don't know if you can. I'm awfully sorry about our being so cramped and having to put you up in one of our first-grader dorm cottages. But it should be fun. We call them fun cottages."

"Yes, I know," said Silvera. "I spent two hours with one of your publicity computers last night. It introduced me to all sorts of other mechanisms and computers. I know the history of your school, its aims and enrollments. I even know all the floor plans. Including that of the underground wing."

Doc Wimby put in, "There's no such thing as an underground wing here, Jose. The computer who told you that was teasing you. For fun. Which machine was it?"

"I can't recall," said Silvera. "About that outside call?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gosh, Jose. We don't like to encourage our grade 1-ers to call outside. So all the phones are fixed to prevent that. If your call is darned important you can hop over to the teachers' compound. They have swell phones over there. Real grown-up."

"I want to get in touch with Miss de Aragon," said Silvera. "When my agents got me this assignment, they mentioned she'd had it earlier and left quite abruptly."

"Yes, quite abruptly. That's right, you know the young lady, huh?"

"I do, yes. I understand she's run off to join a commune."

"She has. Right in the middle of Chapter 6 of *The Machinery Twins Visit A Dynamo,*" said Doc Wimby, still smiling seriously. "As to the purpose of my ringing you up, Jose. I wanted to tell you how pleased I am with the work you've done in the two days you've been here. Imagine your finishing up two books in the series in as many days. Our book division is such an important part of our operation. I'm terribly glad we have someone of your ability. As you may know, we paid Miss de Aragon only $1500 per Machinery Twins book. I think you're really going to be worth every single darn penny of the extra $500 per book your agents demanded. Those scenes with the drop forge are absolutely brilliant. Yet educational. Which is our aim in our Mechanics Hill School book division. We show our young readers the way things work, but we entertain them along the way."

Silvera said, "And you're certain Miss de Aragon is living in Abandoned City No. 14?"

"Golly, yes. Far as I know," answered the long, serious owner of the school. "Oh, one more thing, Jose. Should your work load allow, we'd like you to drop in at the ball tonight."

"Ball?"

"Yes, this is Saturday. Gosh, you've probably been wrestling the typewriter so hot and heavy you've lost all track of time. Tonight's our big Third Grade Graduation Ball. There'll be grownups as well. And fun."

Silvera nodded. "If I finish *The Machinery Twins Visit A Hot Dog Factory* today, I'd like to start on *The Machinery Twins Visit A Boat Yard.*"

"Another book, another $2000, huh?" said Doc Wimby. "Just be sure you leave some time in your schedule for fun. And have a nice lunch." He left the phone screen.

Over beside the rocking horse bed, a fallen-over white-enameled android said, "See, see. You hear what Doc Wimby told you, you bad boy?"

Silvera seamed up his tunic and said, "I'll be over at the teachers' compound."

"Knock a servomechanism on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his keaster just for trying to feed you a nice bowl of soymush and three chocolate-flavored funstix," said the fallen waiter android. "You jumbled up all my insides with that kick, buster. Most kids in Rabuja Territory like to be dandled on a knee and spoon-fed. What's the good of having nicely set-up parents if you can't have a few luxuries? Um. I think I've got mush all in my parabolic reflector and pseudo-honey is dripping down into my tension springs."

"Look to it as a learning experience." Silvera left the cottage.

The tall naked blonde girl said, "Jose Silvera. What a coincidence. There was a priest denouncing you on television only a few moments ago."

"Oh, so?"

"By the way, I'm J. Joanna Hopter. In case you forgot the introductions that were made during your quick hour through the school the other day. I teach 1 to 10."

"Ages one to ten?" asked Silvera, who was standing on the threshold of her cottage. The low real-wood house was just inside the gate of the teachers' compound. Silvera had stopped at the first cottage in his quest for a working phone. There was steam pouring out of the cottage, swirling around the tan girl.

"No, numbers 1 to 10. I handle recognitions in your nursery division." She reached back into the thick mist. "I make use of a lot of puppets. Puppets have been proven highly effective in teaching number comprehension to children in the three-year-old range and possessing a middle to upper middle-class background and upbringing." She slipped a hand puppet on each hand and held them up level with her breasts. "Here are One the Bunny and Three the Bee."

Silvera pointed at the steam. "Before I ask about what I came over for, is there something wrong in there?"

J. Joanna slapped her pretty forehead with Three the Bee. "I forgot when you knocked. Yes, I was about to call our maintenance computer. My sauna bath unit is on the fritz, I'm afraid. Do you know how to fix one?"

"Probably," answered Silvera. "Is your picphone working and in touch with the outside world?"

"Why, yes." The pretty naked blonde stepped back further into her cottage. "Come in, won't you? I was sitting in the sauna closet and, you know, blooey, all of a sudden too much steam." She rubbed her perspiring stomach with One the Bunny.

"You want to put some clothes on while I work on the sauna unit?" asked Silvera, following her into the fog.

"I guess not," answered the naked instructor. "Actually, this is a good chance to practice what I'm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

learning in the Body Unawareness class I'm attending nights in Capital City. That's the sauna over there, next to the casette library."

Great swirls of hot fog were misting out of the narrow bronze-colored doorway that Silvera noticed. He knelt and touched the control unit. It was hot. "Toss me a couple of those puppets." When the girl did, he used them as gloves and got the lid off and the steam control buttons punched. "A simple overload and backlock," he said, standing back and returning the hand puppets.

"You've got grease on Nine the Swine, but I'm grateful." She smiled and brushed at her long hair with the turtle hand.

The mist began to thin. "Did you say somebody was denouncing me on television, Miss Hopter?"

"You can call me J. Joanna, since we're more or less colleagues." She sat down on a mist-freckled tin butterfly chair, sighing faintly. "Yes, the noon news showed a film clip of that phantom priest. You know, Brother Armour of the Church of the Occult Light."

"Yes, I saw his picture on the news yesterday. He's gone underground and is being hunted by the Jaspar Security Corps. He threw a dead cat into the House of Parliament in Capital City last month to protest government policies. How does he know about me?"

The pretty blonde shrugged. "They only showed a few minutes of one of his hideout sermons. You know, he's been popping up here and there all over the Rabuja Territory in the weeks since he went into hiding. He has very good public relations for a fugitive."

"Did he denounce me on moral grounds?" Silvera crossed to the aluminum table that held a picphone.

"He said there were a lot of scoundrels and carpetbaggers and freebooters coming into Rabuja to bilk and exploit the public. All sanctioned by our government, which is made up of pork barrellers, fascists, diddlers and boondogglers."

"Which am I?"

"He said a notorious mercenary freebooter and propagandist named Jose Silvera was here on our planet now, selling his talents to the worst elements," said the girl. "And condoning gross acts of repression."

"Me?" said Silvera. "I wonder how your phantom priest got hold of my name?"

"You're not a mercenary freebooter, are you?"

"I'm a freelance writer," Silvera told the naked girl. "That's a couple notches higher up. I'm really here to ghost some of the Machinery Twins books. Then I'll be gone. What else did Brother Armour have to say?"

"Nothing more relating to you. He went on to denounce the UKs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That's the Unofficial Killers organization, a frightful group of political vigilantes that the government can't, or won't, stop. Then he denounced several fat local tycoons, men such as Marco Hayflea, W. Robert Reisberson and Lorenzo Bellglass."

"Lorenzo Bellglass?" Silvera straightened up.

"You know him?"

"Lorenzo Bellglass owes me $4000."

"Oh, really? For some past writing chore?"

"Yes, for two pulp novels, a still-popular genre on the planet Tarragon," explained Silvera, pacing. "Bellglass owns a pulp magazine publishing company on Tarragon. It's called Cheap Magazines, Inc. He publishes *Cheap Detective, Cheap Adventure* and *Cheap Love*. I did four novels about a character known as The Disguised Detective. Bellglass only paid me for two."

"The freelance life certainly has its negative side, doesn't it? I'm glad I picked the security and challenge of the teaching profession."

"Why's Bellglass on Jaspar?"

"He recently purchased a big summer home out beyond Capital City, rambling sort of place named Moatsworth."

"I'll have to see him before I leave this planet, and get my money."

"You always collect?"

"Usually," said Silvera. "Eventually."

The pretty naked blonde smiled. "I imagine someone as large and muscular as yourself would have little trouble."

Silvera returned the smile. "Now, the phone?"

"Yes, go ahead. I owe you at least one favor."

After punching out the number of the Abandoned City commune, Silvera rested one foot on a cast-iron ottoman. "Did you get to know Willa de Aragon while she was here?"

"Who?"

"Willa de Aragon. She apparently held this ghostwriting job before me."

"Oh, yes, her," replied J. Joanna. "Frail girl. I didn't know her very well. She was only here a matter of weeks. Left in a great hurry. Friend of yours, is she?"

"Yes. I'm trying to call her."

The oval picscreen showed a thin young man in a plaid coverall, sitting on a cracked stretch of sidewalk next to a bent-over phone booth. "Commune No. 14, good afternoon." He had a thick catalogue open on his knees, and behind him rose dusty many-storied metal and glass city buildings. A monorail engine was lying, smashed and rusted, on its back on the sidewalk to his right. "Can you make head or tail out of one of these?"

"What?" asked Silvera.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The bony boy held up the catalogue. "The name of it is *So You're Going To Start A Commune,* subtitled Here's All You Need To Know . . . Plus a Profusely Illustrated Guide To Both Rural and Abandoned City Communal Living. I can't figure out the captions or the profuse illustrations. I've only been a resident here six days. They got me on phone duty."

"I wrote one of those books once, but it was on another planet, where survival conditions are different," said Silvera. "I want to talk to Willa de Aragon. She's new to your commune, too."

"Who?"

"Willa de Aragon."

"Is that her right name?"

"Yes."

"Then she must not be using it hereabouts. What's she look like?"

"She's a tall, coltish brunette, with a deeply tanned skin and a slight feverish look."

The thin boy slapped his catalogue closed and shook his head. "No. I'd have noticed any girl looked that good. What we got here in the way of women is mostly fat girls and one old lady who's tattooed on the right arm above the elbow. But we sure don't have any feverish and coltish brunettes."

"You're certain?"

"Well, I'm new but I think I've met everybody."

"Ask around."

"All I could do for you is yell over the public address system they got set up across the street."

"Do that."

"Just a second." He rose and carefully rested the book on the uneven pavement. He loped out of range.

"Feverish and coltish," said the turtle puppet on J. Joanna's hand. "My, my."

Silvera glanced over at the naked girl. "You're the first lady ventriloquist I've ever met."

The thin boy was back on the screen, saying, "No one responds. What I figure is . . ." His image was replaced by blackness.

Silvera punched the commune number over again but continued to see only blackness. He tried two more times and abandoned the phone.

"Illusive," said the blonde. "Perhaps she got restless yet again and made another move."

Silvera said, "I think I'll go into Capital City and see about taking a skytram ride out to Abandoned City No. 14."

"Immediately?"

Silvera faced her. "Eventually."

"You're welcome to stay here for a while. Perhaps I could, you know, console you."

Silvera said, "Okay, but you'll have to take off those puppets."

Silvera was three blocks from the Capital City skytram depot when he walked into the half

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dozen Unofficial Killers at their work. He was crossing a mall thick with low ornamental trees when the UK vigilantes struck. At one side of the mosaic-tiled mall stood an outdoor cafe built in a circle around an all-season skating rink. Two waiters in black jumpsuits were skimming across the ice as Silvera passed near. There was also a black couple and a thin blonde girl who was doing lopsided figure 8s. From the opaque dome that housed the automatic kitchen six men came, suddenly, skating. They were dressed in grey sheets, ankle length and with two narrow eye slits. Silvera paused to watch.

The young blonde stopped in mid-8 and made a screaming motion, silent, with one thin fist against her bright mouth. The dozen customers, spotted at round white tables, stopped eating. Some stood, pushing back from their places.

"Death to softies!" cried the lead assassin. He reached into a slash pocket in his sheet and drew out a blaster pistol.

At the table nearest Silvera an overweight man with sparse red hair leaped from his chair. "The UKs," he said. He had been dining alone. He grabbed down beneath the shadows under his small table and caught up a pair of ice skates. "I can escape across the ice, outfox them." He began trying to untangle the skate laces. "Drat. What a time for these darn strings to get all knotted." He noticed Silvera. "Say, young fellow. I'm pretty sure I'm about to be the victim of a radical right-wing assassination attempt. What I plan to do is outfox them on the ice. The thing is, I can't get these skates untangled. I guess I should have dined with the skates on. But I said to myself, you'll look silly eating knockwurst with your skates on. Can you lend me a hand and . . ."

Two blasters crackled, and Silvera ducked behind the low stone wall around the outdoor restaurant. Something fell on his head, and pain sparkled around the left side of his skull for an instant. Still hunkered down, he heard the braking of metal skate blades on ice and then a flurry of slush splashed over the low wall on him.

"UK vindicated!" shouted the lead assassin, in a diminishing voice.

When Silvera looked up, there were a waiter and two customers kneeling around the remains of the red-haired man. Silvera shook his head, flexed his knees and walked on. A few yards along, when he had recovered completely from the blow on the head, he noticed that the dead man's ice skates were tangled in the belt of his walking coat. And something was stuffed inside one of the skates that had thwacked him. Gingerly, Silvera fished it out.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The object was a flat groutskin wallet. Silvera opened the wallet to see who the man had been. Before he came to the identification papers, he saw a folded square of heavy cream-colored paper.

"You, Leroy Trinner, are cordially invited to a Clandestine Cocktail Party for the benefit of Certain Liberal Causes," read Silvera. "The time six o'clock, today's date, at Moatsworth. Your host is Lorenzo Bellglass. Your individual admittance password is: day-old bread. Destroy this invitation once you have memorized your password. No need to RSVP." Silvera refolded Leroy Trinner's invitation and ticked it against his chin. He decided to postpone his trip out to the Abandoned City commune.

The butler whispered, "You're not one of the Mexicans?"

Standing on the mansion side of the weathered drawbridge, Silvera shook his head. "Day-old bread," he said toward the butler's eye-sized spy hole in the vast house's oak door.

"Day-old bread," said the butler. "Hold on while I check this nitwit list." The door creaked two inches open. "You're absolutely sure you're not one of the Mexicans?"

"Yes, I am," said Silvera. "Which Mexicans is this?"

"They're supposed to be one of our featured minority groups at today's fund-raising party, sir," explained the butler. He was a small round pink man. "Mr. Bellglass had them teleported all the way from Barnum. They're very hard to get in our Barnum System of planets. I believe Barnum is, in fact, the only planet to possess Mexicans in any quantity. Oppressed Mexicans at least. It's no use teleporting rich, comfortable Mexicans out to a fund-raising affair. At any rate, none of ours have showed up. Six of them and their marimba."

"Marimba?"

"Some sort of musical instrument is how it was explained to me, sir," said the pink butler, a bit more of him showing as the door swung further open. "Mr. Bellglass feels it makes for a pretty tame party if your oppressed group merely stands around. So he always specifies they have to do something. Music, dancing, oratory, dramatic readings. We had some absolutely first-rate acrobatic lepers last week. Day-old bread, here you are. Come in, Mr. Trinner."

Inside, the Moatsworth house was all ramps and galleries and platforms. Rooms hung at various levels and had a varied number of walls. "And where is our host?"

"I believe, sir, you'll find Mr. Bellglass in the entertainment storeroom at the rear of the house," answered the small round pink butler. "He's selecting some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing to divert the guests before the sermon."

"Sermon?"

"Yes, we're proud to have the phantom priest dropping in this evening."

"Brother Armour? I thought he'd denounced Bellglass."

"Merely a subterfuge, sir."

Silvera left the butler and climbed a gold-carpeted ramp. There were already, at a half hour beyond six, two hundred or so guests in the mansion, scattered around on different levels. The first three-walled room Silvera passed held three beautiful young girls, talking to a thin man.

A blonde, absently tweaking her own bare left breast, was asking the thin man, "And how long, exactly, have you been suffering from malnutrition?"

Silvera continued climbing and descending through the multi-leveled Moatsworth house. Here and there lovely girls and slim young men circulated with crisp new wicker collection baskets. Silvera gave a bare-chested silver-haired girl ten of Leroy Trinner's dollars, and she tilted up and kissed his cheek.

"That makes an even three thousand dollars in my little basket already, and the night is young. Thank you, sir."

A jovial woman of fifty stopped him at the foot of the ramp that led to the entertainment storeroom. "Are you Mexican?"

"No."

"You look dark and furtively sensual. I've been told that so is your average Mexican," said the jovial woman. "But you're too tall, I calculate, by half a foot. What is your ethnic background anyway?"

"I'm part marimba." Silvera headed up the blue ramp to the door of the four-walled storeroom. He pushed at the door, which had a warm fleshy feel, and it slid away sideways.

Lorenzo Bellglass was a five-foot-tall man of seventy-nine. His skin sun-dried to a sharp ochre brown, his white hair long and in two braids. A twenty-three-year-old blonde was stroking the small of his back while he bent over a packing crate. She was telling the old man, "You look and act ten years younger than your chronological age, Lorry."

"That's still too frigging old, Doretta." The brown and brittle publisher continued to rummage in the large crate. "There's nothing but harmonica-playing midgets in here. Not what's needed for tonight."

"How can all those poor tiny bitty little men breath inside there, Lorry? When you put the lid down."

"They're frigging androids, you pea-witted bimbo."

Doretta noticed the approaching Silvera, and her stroking of the ancient pulp king's back slowed. "Lorry, here comes a big

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dark swarthy man. Tall and rather handsome in a wide, outdoorsy manner."

"Stow the frigging description and tell him to go away," said Bellglass, not turning.

"Bellglass," said Silvera, "you owe me $4000."

"Silvera!" The old man spun around. "Yes, it is Jose Silvera. Doretta, this is one of our most brilliant younger writers. He could be, he could well be one of the major writers in the Barnum System of planets. Except. Except he's too frigging intent on the money side of things. He doesn't think enough about the esthetic side of things."

"I didn't write four Disguised Detective novels for esthetic reasons. Now let's have that $4000."

"Impossible," said Bellglass. "What you want to do, Silvera, is get hold of someone in our accounting office. You know where that is, don't you? Eighteenth floor of the Cheap Building on the planet Tarragon. See them and I'm sure they'll clear all this up. Because I know a voucher was sent through long, long ago."

"$4000 now."

Something behind Silvera bumped into a tin player piano. "Day-old bread, indeed," said a rasping voice. A gun tip poked at Silvera. "By the Great Arcanum, you're a fraud. Not an hour ago I heard of poor Trinner being felled by UKs, in broad daylight."

"On ice." Silvera turned. The man with the silver gun was as tall as he was. Thinner, smiling, wearing a dark-blue tunic and leotard. "You must be Brother Armour."

"Praise Gruagach," said the phantom priest. "And you are the notorious freebooter, Jose Silvera."

"I'll have to read one of your books, Mr. Silvera," said the blonde Doretta. "Everyone seems to have heard of you except me."

"Shut up, you flea-wit," said old Bellglass. "You suspect Silvera here of being some kind of UK agent, Brother Armour?"

"What else? By Horbehutet, he works for Doc Wimby. Didn't that sweet Willa de Aragon tell me at my clandestine occult mass last month that she was soon to have positive proof that Doc Wimby himself was linked with the Unofficial Killers?"

"Wait," suggested Silvera. He moved sideways, distancing himself a little more from the point of the phantom priest's gun. This put his back to an android symphony orchestra, black-suited and holding their instruments, lined up in straight stiff rows. "You know Willa?"

"That I do, by Oupnekhat," said Brother Armour. He leaned one sharp elbow on a peep show machine, his gun still aimed at Silvera. "It's my assumption that, since you stepped into her job so sudden, you must be in cahoots

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with Doc Wimby and his conservative cohorts."

"That's why you denounced me on television?"

"Did you see that?"

"No, but I was told."

"I was wondering how I looked to you. Some of my furtive parishioners mentioned I looked extremely green in the face this time," said Brother Armour. "You'll understand that being a guerrilla priest I have no time for much television make-up."

"My informant didn't mention your looking excessively green," said Silvera. "Look, Willa and I have the same literary agents now, and that's why I took this job so soon after her. I've been trying to find Willa myself. I was heading out to Abandoned City No. 14 when I got sidetracked."

"Ha," laughed the occult priest. "You'll not find her there, by Zabulon."

"That's the address Doc Wimby has," said Silvera, taking a further step backwards. "And it's what she wrote to my agents."

Brother Armour shook his head. "I held a benediction service in Abandoned City No. 14 not three days ago. Willa de Aragon was not there," he said. "What is more, Silvera, she was never there."

Silvera, frowning, asked, "So where is she?"

"You must know that," replied Brother Armour. "For my inner senses tell me you must be in league with Doc Wimby."

Silvera said, "It's your notion that while she was working at the school Willa stumbled on information that ties Wimby up with the vigilantes."

"Of course and to be sure," replied the phantom priest. "Since she told me as much. She confided in me because she had already realized that our territorial government will do little to stamp out the UKs."

"You suspect Willa never really went to live in a commune."

"Never, exactly."

"Then Doc Wimby has either done away with her, or he's holding her out of sight somewhere."

"The UKs never kill women," said Brother Armour. "They're wretched slaughterers, but they have their code. No, I believe he is holding the poor girl prisoner."

"Where?"

"There is more to Doc Wimby's school than meets the eye."

Silvera said, "The underground wing."

"Which?"

"There's an underground wing at the school," said Silvera. "An old computer I got friendly with told me about it and showed me some floor plans while I was researching for a book. Doc Wimby told me the machine was mistaken."

The pistol lowered slightly. "I've half a mind to believe you.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perhaps you're not a foul spy and hand in glove with the vigilantes."

"While you're debating with your inner spaces," Silvera told him, "I'm going back to the school and see if I can find Willa or at least some trace of her."

"You'd best stay here until I can put out feelers and verify your story."

Silvera said, "That would try my patience."

The gun was now pointed directly at him once more. "I must ask you, by Zabulon, to remain here."

Silvera ducked suddenly and shot his buttocks out. The cymbal-playing android directly behind him toppled over and fell forward, clunking down on the approaching Brother Armour. Silvera stood quickly, caught up the first violinist, and thrust him, like a battering log, into old Bellglass. Then he tipped over the harpist and her harp, two cellists, and a bearded oboe player. He leaped clear of the toppling androids, kicked the silver pistol out of the semiupright priest's hand, and ran to the door.

Outside the storeroom Silvera went down a ramp and headed for a rear exit. On a great hilly patio he encountered the silver-haired collection girl again.

"I'm only five dollars short of $4000," she smiled.

Silvera slowed. "$4000?"

"Actually I have $3984. Would you help?"

"Why, yes." He took the crisp basket from her, wadded up the bills, and stuffed the lump of cash under his walking coat. "Mr. Bellglass will be glad to give you his personal check for an even $4000. Tell him Silvera said it was okay."

"You really think . . . ?" began the girl.

Silvera moved away too rapidly to hear more.

J. Joanna Hopter was now fully clothed in white. Silvera danced her over the broad ballroom floor. Dozens of eight- and nine-year-olds were dancing, too, in dark evening suits and white ball gowns. An equal number of similarly dressed parents and teachers were also on the floor. Swing music was currently popular on Jaspar, and for the third-graders' ball a twenty-four piece swing band had been hired. The members of the orchestra, with the exception of the bald saxophone-playing leader, were dressed in white bunny suits. The leader was costumed as a duck.

When the number ended, the leader's bill flapped and he announced, "It gives your old maestro a real kick to introduce to you now, boys and girls, the founder of your swell school. Here he is, let's have a nice hand for him, Doc Wimby."

After the applause began, Doc Wimby stepped up on the merry-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

go-round-shaped bandstand. Wimby was in his usual white suit but had added a red rubber nose and a lemon-yellow fright wig. "Before I start presenting some of the scholastic achievement awards, let's have a little extra fun," announced the serious-smiling Wimby. "For while I know that students and parents alike are anxious to learn who has taken first place in Tractability, in Retention, and in Kinesthetics, I know, too, we all enjoy a nice game of nose rolling." He held up a blue egg.

Silvera excused himself from the pretty J. Joanna and edged around the dim ballroom. He moved quietly out an exit and started down a dark corridor leading below. Near the first turning he tripped among shadows.

"What the blankety-blank are you up to, palsy-walsy?" A bleary-eyed little boy in a disordered evening suit was flat on his back on the smooth flooring.

"Are you hurt?"

"No, it's blankety-blanking John Barleycorn has laid me low," answered the little boy. "I was seeking new thrills to lift me out of my habitual boredom and got talked into swigging most of a pint of apricot brandy in the boys' room."

"I'll help you up."

"Keep your blankety-blanking hands off, dago. I'm going to sleep it off out here."

"Okay."

"They haven't given out the awards yet?"

"No."

"I'm up for a scroll in Empathy," said the blurry little boy. "What a blankety-blank bore."

"Why all the blanks?"

"I'm much too young to swear."

Silvera continued on.

In a basement filled with computers, his second stop, he walked directly to the computer at the rear of the room. This was a large outmoded mechanism, dented and smelling of dust. "Evening, Pop," said Silvera, activating the machine.

"Howdy, Jose," replied the old computer. "Nice to see you again. They mostly ignore old Pop these days. Oh, but I guess I told you that the last time you were down."

"I'd like to know more about that underground wing."

"Sure thing. I know all about the place. I keep up. You don't keep up and you get stale. What is old age if it isn't not keeping up?"

"How do I get to the underground wing?"

"Take corridor 18 after you leave here. Then go right and down hall 46. Here comes the tricky part. When you reach the very smack-dab end of 46, go use the mountain-spring water cooler on your left. Left mind, not right. Turn the second additive button four times left, six right, five left. Then squirt the water button, and a panel will open in the dead end

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the wall. Go down the spiral ramp, and you're in the underground wing. Built twenty years ago during a war scare. If you need to get out quick, there's another false exit in hall 22 of the underground wing. Works the same way, with the water cooler," said the old computer. "You know, Jose, I got me a hunch there's something fishy going on down there. Men in sheets and all. They even got a girl locked up in a little room."

"Girl? Do you know where she is?"

"Sure thing, Jose. I keep up. They got her in a room that says Stationery and Supplies on the door."

"Thanks."

"Got to rush off? Well, come again. Don't forget old Pop."

Silvera left, followed the computer's instructions, and found himself an extra level below ground. The metal-walled halls were thinly lit with yellow light strips. While he was still looking for Stationery and Supplies, two men in grey sheets came around a turn.

"Who?" said the first vigilante, reaching into a sheet pocket.

"No time for that," said Silvera. "They've spotted that softie Brother Armour."

"Armour?"

"Right. He's up at the dance disguised as a bunny rabbit."

"Son of a gun," said the second UK vigilante. "But who are you?"

"A new recruit."

"Why aren't you sheeted up?"

"They didn't have one in my size."

The first man said, "Let's quit jawing, Virgil, and get topside." He gripped his pistol and ran.

Silvera caught Virgil's elbow. "Wait. Doc Wimby wants the girl, Willa de Aragon. She's got to be moved out the back way at once."

"Here's the key, recruit. You do it," said the hooded Virgil. "I have to hurry and catch up with my buddy."

"Right."

"Death to softies."

"Yes, indeed." Alone, Silvera ran. He found the right door in under five minutes. He got it open and there was Willa sitting on a large box of carbon paper. "Let's go."

"Jose," said the dark, rangy girl. "What have you been up to since we met on Murdstone last year?"

Silvera pulled her to her feet and out into the corridor. As they headed for the secret exit Pop had told him about, Silvera told the girl what he'd been up to.

They went through the exit opening and climbed a ridged ramp. It brought them out into a sloping woods a quarter of a mile above the school.

"How did you find out exactly where I was and how to get us out free?" asked Willa, breathing through her mouth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mostly by making friends with a computer."

Willa sighed and leaned back against a young oak. She smiled at him. "I'm sorry this is one time you won't collect your fee. Nor will I."

Silvera reached into the breast pocket of his evening suit. "Here's the $6000 Doc Wimby owes you." He showed her a pale blue check. "And the $4000 he owes me." He held up a second check. "We have to get to the all-night bank in Capital City and cash these quick, Willa."

"How'd you get them, Jose?" she asked, taking his hand.

"While I was finding out how things work, I also made friends with the check-writing android," he said.

FULL COLOR PRINTS OF F&SF COVERS

COVERS BY BONESTELL, EMSH, HUNTER, GAUGHAN, AND OTHERS

These beautiful full color proofs of F&SF covers are **without overprinting;** they are mailed flat and are suitable for framing.

$1.00 for one color print
3.00 for four different color prints
5.00 for eight different color prints

Each order for four will include one wrap-around double cover print, and each order for eight will include two.

(Special offer: A comprehensive collection of these beautiful prints—65 in all—for only $20.00)

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753
I enclose $_____ ($1.00 for one, $3.00 for four, $5.00 for eight or $20.00 for 65. Send _____ full color prints of F&SF covers without overprinting to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Requests for specific covers will be filled; covers for most issues since 1963 are available, but supply is limited so act promptly!)

This month's cover by Mel Hunter is available. It is the fifth in a new series of robot covers done especially for F&SF (the previous four were the January, May, September and December 1970 issues; all are available).

LICENSED TO ONE.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FILMS

Baird Searles

Brewster McCloud (MGM) presents a problem for this reviewer . . . and a second problem for this reviewer as one who is sf/fantasy oriented. To take the second problem first . . . is *Brewster McCloud* a fantasy? I say yes, but must add that it can be taken on many levels: symbolic, or as a parable (parabolic?), or simply as a totally mad comedy, with the kind of fantasy that is implicit in great comedy. However, on a purely narrative level, it *is* a fantasy, a fantasy of situation and character, one of those in which little overt action is "magic" or speculatively scientific, but whose characters and situations are so out of the ordinary as to make it—that word again—fantastic. A literary analog would be Mervyn Peake's beautiful *Titus Groan*, one of the great fantasies which has nothing impossible, in the here-and-now sense, in it.

As for problem #1, a reviewer is presented with a problem when a film is so consistently filled with surprises that to mention practically any aspect of it is giving something away. So I will touch very lightly on details, citing only certain ones to justify the above question. Brewster McCloud is a young man who lives in the Astrodome in Houston (shades of *Evening Primrose*) and is totally occupied with building a one-man flying machine. In this endeavor, he is guided by a mysterious and sexy young woman, Louise, who when she disrobes at one point, reveals strange scars on her back as of amputated wings. Her constant companion and aide is an intelligent raven. Wings and bird droppings are constant themes throughout the film; several mysterious murders that panic the city (whose victims were incidentally people that had gotten in Brewster's way) are linked by the avian excrement found near each body. The plot, such as it is, is simply Brewster's road to his goal, hampered by Astrodome guards, detectives from San Francisco, and various females (it is implied that virginity is essential to success, one of the more arcane ramifications of the proceedings).

In cinema jokes are rampant throughout; there are references to everything from *Bullitt* to *The Wizard of Oz*, and there are constant visual gags going on peripheral to the action. Bud Cort's owl eyed innocence is ideal for the role of Brewster, and Sally Kellerman's ironic eroticism makes Louise a perfect not-quite-fallen angel. Margaret (Wicked Witch of the West) Hamilton gets things off to a suitably unlikely start sing-

continued on p. 110

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This story about a tenant who was harboring Something Very Strange in a rathole of a tenement appeared once before in a short-lived magazine. but will be new to almost all our readers. A new collection of stories by Avram Davidson, SOURCES OF THE NILE, *will be published soon by Doubleday.*

THE TENANT

by Avram Davidson

BALTO, THE SLUMLORD, A little grey suit of a man with a long, hairy nose, hired Edgel. That is, not just this one time or any one particular time, or steadily, but every now and then, Balto hired Edgel. Edgel was sort of large, and sort of lopsided, and for this last he drew a disability pension on which he drank more than was good for him. Often, when his full and sallow face was flushed with some bargain in bottled goods, he'd look down and there was Balto.

Persuasively, he'd tell Edgel that this was no life for him, that there was no future in it, that he ought to be looking around for something to do. But Edgel never needed to be persuaded, as he fully agreed. And so he'd go to work for Balto as agent/collector in some one or other of the heaps of vertical ratholes from which Balto drew great sums of money. And he pictured himself growing respectable. Often, of course, it turned out that in the house Edgel was charged with was a tenant who had—for one reason or another, generally a good one—promised to cut Balto open and draw his tripes if he dared present his face again. And as soon as this particular menace ceased, Balto dismissed Edgel with a sigh. Or it might be that the housing and health people were anxious to close in on Balto, in which case they were baffled by seeing only Edgel, who was not summonsable. And when the heat was off, Balto, with a sigh— And so on.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Edgel never learned. But, anyway (as Balto pointed out), he was no worse off than before, he'd made some money, and it wasn't like he had nothing to fall back on: He had his pension.

One night, teetering on a dirty curbstone, wondering if he should venture over to a new bar reputed to give an ounce and a quarter of whiskey for the price of an ounce, or perhaps to scout around for a certain taxi driver who had made an agreement with a new woman, Edgel looked down and there was Balto.

"I will not deceive you, Edgel," he said, "I have a job to be done and there is no one I trust to do it except you." For this was a fact: Edgel was honest. His accounts often didn't balance and were short, but he made up the difference himself. Scrupulously. "Furthermore," said Balto, with great earnestness, "I'll tell you immediately that the job isn't permanent. In fact, the better you do your work, the sooner the job is over. But there is money in it." And he named impressive sums.

"Do you think I like this rotten business?" Balto asked. "I would much rather own clean property. All I've ever asked was a decent chance. And now I have it. And I want to share it with you."

In short, no less than six of Balto's rat-eaten tenements were included in a section which was to be torn down and new housing put up. The authorities had condemned the properties on behalf of the builders. The builders were offering the contractor a bonus for speedy completion, the contractor was passing on part of the bonus to owners (including Balto) for speedy vacating, and Balto (Great-Heart) was dividing part of it between Edgel and the tenants.

"And," he wound up, "as a matter of fact—I tell you in confidence, Edgel—I am very familiar with the men in this new syndicate. We, I mean they, will need a staff of dependable people, experienced and honest. A word to the wise. I really mustn't say any more." The long, hairy nose looked up at Edgel, significantly.

The next day, Edgel met by appointment a man named Hallam, who had a wen and who worked for a real estate firm that was engaged in relocating tenants who didn't relocate themselves. "They don't appreciate it," he told Edgel. "You might think they'd be glad to leave these ratholes, but they aren't. Of course," he pointed out, walking rapidly down the littered street, "the places we're moving them into are also ratholes, but what the Hell, it's a change of scenery."

They passed a tiny store that sold textile remnants, ready-made rejects in factory clothes, and all sorts of things; and a dark little man crouching in the doorway

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like an upright bat uncurled himself and fluttered at them. "Remember, you find me a good new place, now? Remember."

"Yes, yes," Hallam assured him. "We certainly will. You start getting packed." To Edgel, he said, "He'll take what we give him, or find his own self a place."

Then they started climbing scabby stairs. By noon they were in the last house on Egel's list. "With this building," said Hallam, "we've got both good luck and bad. Good luck—the middle floor tenants took the bonus and moved right into the place I offered them. Bad luck—this lady on the top floor. She's the main problem. Some of the people, now, they say they won't move and then you got to evict them and that could lead to all kinds of trouble. This one, she doesn't exactly say she *won't* move, but she don't make no *move* to move, if you folla me. I feel sorry for them when they get that sick look on their face."

The downstairs hall, where they paused, was dark and damp and fetid. "It can make you feel like a criminal, some of these people that are afraid to move because they've forgotten they ever lived anywhere else. Because, really, she's a nice, quiet person." *Some* of the tenants were neither nice nor quiet, and it had become easier for Edgel to understand why Balto was parting with money for a surrogate. Hallam said, now, "Don't pay no attention if that old bum downstairs says anything. He's just a dirty old bum. Not sorry for *him*, you can betcher life."

The dirty old bum downstairs looked, sounded, and smelled like a dirty old bum. He began to curse as soon as they knocked; he cursed in English, a tongue singularly poor in obscene invention, and he repeated his scant store over and over. Then he stopped. He leered at them, tiny filmed eyes squinting and winking from his ruined face. "Going upstairs, boys?" he asked. Softly, slyly. "She'll let you—if she's in the mood. If she's in the mood, she'll let anybody. And when Old Larry says, 'Anybody,' that's just what he means. *Anybody*."

The stairs creaked and shifted. There was more light on the top floor because of a dirty hall window. An odd noise came from somewhere. Hallam knocked. The woman who answered did not come out to the hall but stood behind the half-closed door and peered out. Edgel couldn't see her clearly, but she was just an ordinary-looking woman.

"Mrs. Waldeck, this is Mr. Edgel, the landlord's agent." Silence. "Have you been getting ready to move? If you move before the end of next month, we find you another place—"

"I don't want another place," she said, in a quick, weak, fearful voice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"—and we give you a bonus. How much of a bonus, Edgel?"

"Maybe even a hundred dollars," Edgel said.

"I don't want a bonus. I can't move. I lived here thirty-two years. I'm a sick woman. You can't make me move out."

Edgel said, brusquely, "That's a lot of nonsense, Mrs. Waldeck. We can come here with a cop and a marshal tomorrow and throw you out on the sidewalk. But we don't want to do that," he said, wheedlingly. "We'll get you a place on the ground floor, you won't have to climb all these stairs, and we'll give you a bonus. They're going to tear this house down, you know."

The woman had begun to shake her head while he was talking. Then she said, "Maybe they won't tear this one down. I could pay more rent. Two dollars more?—three? You tell them I'll pay more rent, because I'm a sick woman and I can't move, and so they won't tear this house down. Because I can't *move*!" Her voice rose to a shriek and she slammed the door. After a minute they started down the steps.

"What we could do, maybe," Edgel suggested, "is we could get a guy with a badge and a paper, like they both look real, and she wouldn't know the difference. A dumb broad who thinks they'll leave the house stay up for her extra three dollars! And we move her and her things into one of those places you got. That way, we can still collect the bonus."

Hallam said, yeah, maybe they could do that, if they were real careful about it. "You hear that funny noise?" he asked.

"Sounded like a parrot?"

"Sounded more to me like a frog."

"Maybe she keeps frogs to feed the parrot?" And they both laughed, and they went somewheres to get a bite to eat and a glass of beer.

It was late one night, some weeks after, when Edgel walked with careful feet along the dark sidewalk. He told himself that he was not—was *not*—drunk. Only a little wine. The air would clear his head. But the air, instead of affecting his head, affected his kidneys. Edgel stepped into the blackness of an alley. The tap-tap of a woman's heels on the cracked sidewalk made him draw deeper into the darkness. At the same time the sound put an idea or two into his fuddled mind. Hot, urgent, ugly ideas. What sort of woman, what kind of woman, would be out on the prowl on the streets at night . . . ?

Then she stopped just at the lip of the alley, and in the thin shaft of lamplight. She turned her face to and fro as if she sensed someone's presence. A feathered hat was on her head, and her dress,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low-cut, was of a rich fabric. Her mouth shone red. She smiled, her brows arched. He took a silent half step forward. Then his bleared vision cleared.

Edgel saw that the hat was an old ruin of a hat and that the dress was spotted and gappy. The flesh that had seemed rounded and ivory just a second ago, was sagging and raddled with hollows, in which the skin was yellow wrinkles or knotted folds of fat. The eyes were painted; the lips revealed a thin, loose line beneath smears of greasy rouge inexpertly applied to paint a floppy paraphrase of a mouth. And the eyes rolled and winked, and the painted lips made mouthings that hinted of hard-lost memories of smiles.

And he saw that it was Mrs. Waldeck. And he shrank into his clothes.

She saw someone. Her hands smoothed her dress. Her face simpered. She walked off with a roll of her hips and the tip-tap of her heels. Suddenly, the street went quiet. When he emerged from the alley, there was no one in sight. There was nothing in sight. He scuttled away, and he thought of Old Larry's words. *When she's in the mood, she'll let anybody . . .* Any-*body* . . .

One by one, the tenants moved on. Edgel paused to speak to the bat-like little dark man in the shop, whose plaint that they find him a good new place had begun to assume a querulous tone. "Listen," Edgel asked him, "who is this Mrs. Waldeck? What kind of a—"

He stopped. The little man was making gestures, his face gone yellow the while. He touched his hand to his fly. He made a V of two fingers and peered through it, then he pushed the thumb up and closed the same fingers around it, and he spat three times with desperate vigor. And from within his greasy shirt he pulled out a cord from which hung a cross, a medallion, a tiny coral hand with open palm, and a black-obsidian longhorn— These he kissed with fervor and with noises of heavy breathing. Then he looked up at Edgel, thin waxy lids drawn back from shining, frightened eyes.

"I don't talk to her," he said. "I don't talk about her. She bring me those quilts she make—I sell them to Gypsy peoples—that's all. I don't know no more. *Please.* No more!" And he scurried into his pack-rat's nest of a store.

And so Edgel set his vigil. Into an empty flat on the other side of the street he moved a big chair and some food and a few bottles. She'd have to go out for food herself, sooner or later. And finally, at the start of the blue dusk the afternoon of the second day of his vigil, she did go out. She stood at the steps for a long while. She moved away slowly. But she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moved away! She had several quilts and a shopping bag with her; so she would be gone for some time. How long? Long enough. Edgel crossed the street, entered her house, and sped up the stairs on his toes. Silent, though no one was left in the house to hear him (Old Larry having succumbed to the lure of the bonus and quitted the place, foul mouth and handcart of fetid plunder off to some unknown hole). Edgel told himself, as he fumbled with the keys, that he had a right to do what he was doing—he was the landlord's agent (and damn Balto for making him do his dirty work!); she, tenant—ex-tenant, really—was living there by sufferance and not by right, her rent refused. And the day of reckoning near. But his heart beat in sickly beats, and it told him that what he was doing was vile and cheap. And the key rasped in the old lock, and then the door opened.

The room he entered was dim and crowded with old furniture. He saw something to one side, flashed his pocket light. The quilting frame and a bag of dirty-looking cotton padding. It was very warm, and there was a bad smell. Something moved, something sounded. It was in the opposite corner—a mound, like a vast tea cozy, and on top of it a pair of heavy leather gloves.

Edgel stood there another minute. Then he pulled off the cover, and again he heard movement, sounds, but the light was dim and he could see nothing. So he turned on the electric light and turned to face what seemed to be a huge birdcage.

At first glance he thought he saw a child inside of it—a child like one of those in the hideous photographs of famines: all bloated huge belly and stick-like arms and legs—but in just an instant he saw it was no child. Nor was it starving, not that way it moved so quickly again and again, throwing itself against the heavy wires, beating with its tiny fists and gibbering and yammering in that hateful voice, half shrill scream and half thick croak—and both sounds together.

The fists uncurled and made wrinkled palms and twiggy fingers with yellow, twisted talons—cracked-skin fingers with bitten-looking warts and dirty flaps of skin between them, which at once stretched out to become webs up to the first joint. (How many joints there might be, he could not afterwards remember, but more than on his own fingers; and he had been put in mind, by those fingers, of the bandy, loathsome legs of some huge bird-eating spider.) On the lips and chin and paps were scatterings of long hairs, and there were clotted tufts in the armpits. Its coloring was dead and litch-like, and the skin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glistened with a dewy sheen. Edgel felt that if he himself had no mind at all, even, and no sense or reckoning, that if he should feel the creature touch against him ever so briefly or slightly, that his body of its own would recoil and quake and fling itself, babbling, away.

And the head thrust against the wire of the cage, worried at it with tiny sharp teeth, and licked at it with a blue-black tongue.

Edgel flung himself around. Mrs. Waldeck was there. She came at him. There was a flat-iron in her hand. Her face was white and blank. He seized her wrist, struggled, and she spat at him. Then he twisted, and the iron fell. Her eyes looked into his and her lips moved.

"Sometimes he is very sweet," she said. "Sometimes he'll take food from my fingers."

"What—?" Edgel babbled. "What—?" And he thrust her away from between him and the door. The bag she had in her other hand broke and scattered, and he saw the grey, coffin-shaped tablets, with the skull and bones embossed on them.

After the second double-shot he felt able to unclench his fists, and it was safe to relax a bit without fear of the quick, spasmodic grunting noises he had heard himself making (five hundred years ago) as he fled down the rotting stairs. Swallowing, swallowing the quick flow of spittle which the drinks produced, taking the chaser at a gulp to wash away the taste of his own bile, he stared at a mass of color before his eyes. It came into focus just as the dull roaring in his ears did. A calendar of a naked woman with great gourds of breasts, and the pounding brass of a jukebox, and on his right the hoarse and knowing voice of some barroom brave:

"Whuddiya mean, 'd he make out? Whuddiya mean? He never did 'n he never will, not unless he pays fr it, *an'* no wonder. *You* seen whuttee looks like? Christ! that, only a mother could love!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here is the conclusion to Jack Vance's two part novel about the region called Shant on the planet Durdane, a region under the rule of the mysterious Anome, also known as the Faceless Man. (If you missed part one, the author's synopsis will bring you up to date.) Mr. Vance has finished a second and is currently working on a third novel set on Durdane.

THE FACELESS MAN

by Jack Vance

(2nd of 2 parts)

SYNOPSIS: The planet Durdane lies far to the back of the Skiaffarilla Cluster and after nine thousand years has drifted below the horizon of terrestrial memory; for the folk of Durdane, Earth is only a myth.

Three suns, pale-blue, pink, pearl-white, illuminate Durdane, casting a lavender-tinted light. The single large continent is Caraz, a world-mass inhabited by barbarians. A second smaller continent to the east includes Shant and Palasedra, separated by the Great Salt Bog. The most populous region of Durdane is Shant, an agglomeration of sixty-two cantons with little in common save language, music, color symbology, and submission to the rule of the Anome (sometimes known as the Faceless Man). The Anome's identity is a mystery even to his assistants, the 'Benevolences': a system conducing to maximum scope and efficiency.

The Anome's authority derives from his ability to explode by radio signal the coded torc worn by every adult of Shant. This penalty is rare; in any event the Anome merely enforces cantonal law. Across the placid centuries there has been little need to project a strong or personal decisiveness.

At Bashon in Canton Bastern is the temple community of the Chilites. Under the influence of the drug galga, the Chilite men worship the sublime female principle Galexis. Ordinary women are excluded from the rite and are held to be unclean. The young women of the community inhabit cottages along Rhododendron Way, consorting with wayfarers; older women work in the tannery. To Eathre is born a child, Gastel Etzwane, sired by Dystar, a wandering musician of great power. Etzwane, a serious, sensitive child, learning the identity of his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blood-father, is stimulated to play a khitan discarded by a wandering musician: unorthodox activity by Chilite standards. When Etzwane's bearded 'Soul Father' Osso discovers Etzwane's secret, he wrathfully punishes both Etzwane and Eathre. Etzwane manages to escape; he is still too young for a torc. Eathre, not so lucky, must remain; she is sent to work in the tannery.

Etzwane makes his way west, encountering hardships and adventures. In Canton Trestevan he steals a coat; ahulphs, the semi-intelligent indigenes of Durdane, are sent to track him. In desperation Etzwane implores the aid of a passerby—a tall white-haired man of uncertain age. This man, a certain Ifness, declares himself unable to help. Etzwane, with the ahulphs almost upon him, is finally rescued by the musician Frolitz, who allows Etzwane to join his troupe.

In due course Frolitz brings the troupe to the ancient glass city Garwiy, in Canton Garwiy. The Anome reputedly lives in one of the Aesthete palaces on the Ushkadel, above the city, and in the Corporation Plaza maintains an agency where petitions may be registered. Etzwane addresses to the Anome a five florin petition protesting the harsh penalties visited upon his mother. The Anome instructs Etzwane that his recourse, in accordance with the laws of Canton Bastern is to pay off his mother's indenture, a matter of fifteen hundred florins.

Years pass. In Shant's central Wildlands the Roguskhoi, andromorphic savages eight feet tall, have suddenly become a menace. No one knows their origin, though Palesedra, the traditional enemy of Shant, is suspected. The Roguskhoi display an insatiable lust and engage human females of any age or condition in a joyless frenzy of copulation. The issue is unnatural; in four months the woman gives birth to a dozen Roguskhoi imps, and henceforth can produce only further litters of Roguskhoi. Inexplicably, the Anome will not move against the Roguskhoi, in spite of the popular will for action.

In the city Brassei, Frolitz gives Etzwane (now an accomplished musician) a bonus, which augments Etzwane's savings to where he can discharge Eathre's indenture. In a tavern he once again encounters Ifness who by chance is journeying east; the two sail east by the same balloon. At Carbado in Canton Bastern they meet horrifying news: the Roguskhoi, raiding down from the Hwan, have pillaged Bastern.

Etzwane and Ifness hasten to Bashon, to find devastation. The Chilites have secured themselves within their fortress-like temple; the women however have been herded back into the Wildlands.

Ifness, for all his peculiar detachment, is interested in the Roguskhoi. He helps Etzwane poison two casks of wine which they load aboard a wagon, then set off in pursuit. At Mirk Meadow, fifteen miles south of Bashon, they come upon the Roguskhoi. The time is sunset; the Roguskhoi are setting up camp.

Etzwane and Ifness display themselves, then flee, abandoning the wagon with the poisoned wine. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great good spirits the Roguskhoi convey the poisoned wine back to their camp.

In the shadow of the purple-pears Ifness and Etzwane halted the pacers. "Now," said Ifness, "we must wait."

ETZWANE MADE NO REPLY. THE Roguskhoi, abandoning the women, swarmed around the trap. The casks were broached; the Roguskhoi drank with hoarse bellows of approval.

In a strained voice Etzwane asked, "How long before the poison acts?"

"So much poison would kill a man within minutes. I hopefully assume that the Roguskhoi metabolism is similar."

The two watched the encampment. The wine had been totally consumed. With no evidence either of sickness or intoxication the Roguskhoi turned upon the women. Each rushed into the whimpering group and without regard for age or condition seized a female and began to tear away clothing.

Ifness said, "The moment has come."

Several of the Roguskhoi had stopped short to gaze uncomprehendingly at the ground. Slowly they touched their abdomens, their throats, drew their fingers across their naked red scalps. Others displayed similar symptoms. The women, gasping and sobbing, crawled away in random directions, like insects poured from a bottle. The Roguskhoi commenced to writhe, to dance a strange slow ballet; they raised a crooked leg, clamped knee against abdomen, hopped, then repeated the antic on the opposite leg. Their faces sagged, their mouths hung pendulous.

Suddenly, in terrible rage, one cried out a word incomprehensible to Etzwane. The others shouted the same word, in grotesque despair. One of the Roguskhoi dropped to his knees and slowly crumpled to the ground. He began to work his arms and legs like a beetle turned on its back. Certain of the women who had almost reached the bawberry grove, began to run. The movement stimulated the warriors to frenzy. Staggering, reeling, they lurched in pursuit, flailing with their bludgeons. Screaming, sobbing, the women ran this way and that; the Roguskhoi jumped among them; the women were caught and beaten to the ground.

The Roguskhoi began to topple, one after the other. Ifness and Etzwane stepped out upon the meadow; the last Roguskhoi erect noticed their presence. He snatched out his scimitar and hurled it. "Take care!" cried If-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness and sprang nimbly back. The scimitar whirled murderously through the air but curved to the side and slashed into the dirt. With renewed dignity Ifness once more stepped forward, while the last Roguskhoi fell to the ground.

Ifness said, "The trap appears to be unharmed. Let us reclaim it."

Etzwane looked at him, face blank with horror. He made a sound in his throat, moved forward a step, then halted. The features of the women had been blurred: by motion, by distance. Almost all he had known. Some had been kind, some had been beautiful, some had laughed, some had been sorrowful. With his poison he had contributed to the massacre, still—what else, what else?

"Come along," said Ifness brusquely. "Lead your pacer." He marched across the meadow, never troubling to look back.

Etzwane followed sluggishly, forcing his feet to move.

Arriving at the Roguskhoi camp, Ifness inspected the bodies with fastidious interest. The Roguskhoi still made small movements: twitches, jerks, clenched digging with the fingers. Etzwane forced himself to look here and there. He noticed the body of his sister Delamber: dead. Her face had been smashed almost beyond recognition; Etzwane recognized first the red-gold glints of her hair. . . . He wandered across the field. There was Eathre. He fell down on his knees beside her and took her hands. He thought she still lived, though blood oozed from both her ears. He said, "It is Etzwane: your son Mur. I am here. I tried to save you, but I failed."

Eathre's lips moved. "No," he thought he heard her say, "you didn't fail. You saved me . . . Thank you, Mur . . ."

Etzwane dragged branches and boughs from the bawberry woods, stacked them high; he had no space to dig a grave. He placed the bodies of Eathre and Delamber on the pyre and placed more branches to lean around and over. He needed much wood; he made many trips.

Ifness had been otherwise occupied. He harnessed the restive pacers to the trap and repaired the reins. Then he turned his attention to the Roguskhoi. He examined them closely, with frowning concentration. To Etzwane, preoccupied, they seemed much alike: muscular, massive creatures, a head taller than the average man, with a skin hard and sleek as copper. Their features, which might have been hewn with an axe, were contorted and twisted, like those of a demon-mask, probably the effect of the poison. They grew no hair, on head or body; their costumes were almost pitifully meager: black

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leather crotch-pieces, a belt from which hung their bludgeons and scimitars. Ifness took up one of the scimitars and examined the gleaming metal with interest. "No product of Shant here," he mused. "Who forged such metal?"

Etzwane had no answer. Ifness placed the scimitar in the back of the trap. The cudgels likewise interested him. The handles were seasoned hardwood, eighteen inches long; the heads were iron balls studded with two-inch points: terrible weapons.

Etzwane finally completed the pyre and set it afire on four sides. Flame licked up into the air.

Ifness had taken upon himself a grisly investigation. With his knife he had slit open the abdomen of one of the Roguskhoi. Blackish-red intestines roiled out, which Ifness moved aside with a stick. With nostrils fastidiously pinched, he continued his inspection of the creature's organs.

Dusk had come to the meadow. The pyre burnt high. Etzwane did not care to tarry longer. He called to Ifness, "Are you ready to leave?"

"Yes," said Ifness. "I have one small further task."

While Etzwane watched in utter astonishment, Ifness selected the corpses of six women; deftly cutting off the battered heads, he took the six torcs. Going to the pond he washed torcs, knife and hands, and returned to where Etzwane stood by the trap, now unsure of his own sanity.

Ifness seemed brisk and cheerful. He stood back, to watch the flames from the pyre lick high into the gathering darkness. "It is time to go," said Ifness.

Etzwane climbed into the seat of the trap. Ifness turned the pacers across the meadow. Etzwane suddenly signaled him to a halt. Ifness pulled up the pacers; Etzwane jumped to the ground. He ran back to the pyre, extracted a burning branch. This he carried to the galga plantation and fired the foliage, which was dense, dry, heavy with resin. Flames surged up through clouds of black smoke. In grim delight Etzwane stood back to watch, then he ran back to the trap.

Ifness had no comment to make; Etzwane was unable to sense either approval or disapproval, but did not care particularly.

Leaving the meadow, they halted and looked back at the two fires. The galga patch lit the sky; the pyre glowed ruby red. Etzwane turned away, blinking. The fires were the past; when the fires died to ashes, the past would be gone . . .

Down the dark valley moved the trap, by the light of that blazing array of stars known as the Skiaffarilla. The shuffle of hooves, the creak of harness, the soft scrape of wheels were the only

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sounds; they magnified the silence. Once or twice Etzwane looked back, to watch the red glow slowly fading. At last he could see it no more; the sky was dark. He turned in the seat and gazed somberly ahead.

In a quiet and formal voice, Ifness asked, "Now that you have studied the Roguskhoi, what is your opinion?"

Etzwane said, "They must be mad or demon-possessed. In a sense they are pitiable. But they must be destroyed."

Now that he had started talking, he found that he could not stop. "All that I have hoped and worked for is gone. Who is to blame? The Roguskhoi. Myself. The Faceless Man. The Chilites. All of us are to blame. I should have come sooner. I try to excuse myself: I had insufficient funds, I could not have anticipated the Roguskhoi raid. Still, I should have come sooner. The Roguskhoi—they are mad things; I am glad I poisoned them; I would gladly poison the entire race. The Chilites? I don't care a fig for them either. The Faceless Man? There is another matter: We have trusted him to protect us; we pay his imposts; we wear his torc; we follow, as we must, his edicts. To what end? Why has he not acted against the Roguskhoi? It is disheartening, to say the least!"

"And to say the most?"

Etzwane only shook his head. "Why did you cut open the Roguskhoi?"

"I was curious as to their physiology."

Etzwane gave a laugh which held a shrill note of wildness. He cut the laugh short. For a period there was silence. The trap moved down the starlit valley. Etzwane had no notion of how far they had come, how far they must go. He asked another question: "Why did you take the torcs?"

Ifness sighed. "I had hoped you would not ask that question. I cannot provide you a satisfactory answer."

"You have many secrets," said Etzwane.

"All of us keep covert certain areas of ourselves," said Ifness. "You yourself for instance: you have evinced dissatisfaction with the Faceless Man, but you do not reveal your further intentions."

"They are not secret," said Etzwane. "I shall go to Garwiy; I shall buy a Purple Petition; I shall argue my views with as much clarity as possible. Under the circumstances the Faceless Man must take notice."

"One would think so," Ifness concurred. "But let us assume the contrary, what then?"

Etzwane squinted sidewise at the stiff yet casual silhouette against the blazing Skiaffarilla. "Why should I trouble myself with remote eventualities?"

"I agree that overplanning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sometimes limits spontaneity," said Ifness. "Still, when there are but two cases of equal probability, it is wise to consider contingencies in both directions."

"I have ample time to form my plans," said Etzwane shortly.

Chapter 9

Back at Carbado, Ifness relinquished the conveyance and the two walked to the balloon-way station. To Etzwane's surprise Ifness now declared his intention of returning westward.

"I thought you were heading east," said Etzwane.

"An urgent matter takes me elsewhere," said Ifness.

"To Garwiy?"

"To Garwiy."

The balloon rose into the air; riding the fresh morning wind, it slid up the slot toward Junction.

During Etzwane's time, Frolitz had taken his troupe to Garwiy but seldom and only for short periods; the folk of Garwiy preferred entertainments more dramatic, more frivolous, more urbane. Etzwane nonetheless found Garwiy a fascinating place, if only for the marvel and grace of its vistas.

In all the human universe there was no city like Garwiy, which was built of glass: blocks, slabs, prisms, cylinders of glass: purple, green, lavender, blue, rose, dark scarlet.

During the reign of King Jorje Shkurkane, Garwiy reached its peak. All sixty-two cantons contributed to the glory of Garwiy; the Pandamon Bailiff was a familiar sight in the far corners of Shant. Then, during King Kharene's unlucky reign, the South revolted; the Palasedran Eagle-Dukes crossed the Great Salt Bog, to spark the Fourth Palasedran War, which terminated the Pandamon Dynasty.

During the Sixth Palasedran War, Palasedran bombardiers established themselves on the Ushkadel Ridges, from where they were able to lob air-mines into the old city. Fountain after fountain of antique glass spurted high into the sunlight. At last the Warlord Viana Paizafiume launched his furious uphill assault, which subsequently became the substance of legend. With his cataphracts destroyed, his elite Pikes dazed and leaderless, his Glass Darts cramped against the base of the cliff, Paizafiume destroyed the Palasedran host with a horde of crazed ahulphs, daubed with tar, set afire and directed up the Ushkadel. Victory was a poor exchange for Garwiy shattered; the deed brought the Palasedrans a permanent legacy of distrust and bitterness.

Viana Paizafiume, from Canton Clirris on the east coast, refused to allow another Pandamon upon the Purple Throne and called a con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clave of the cantons to form a new government. After three weeks of bickering and caprice, Paizafiume's patience was exhausted. Mounting the podium he indicated a platform on which a screen had been arranged.

"Beyond that screen," decreed Paizafiume, "sits your new ruler. I will not tell you his name; you will know him only by his edicts, which I shall enforce. Do you understand the virtue of this arrangement? When you do not know your ruler, you will be unable to plot, wheedle or suborn. Justice at last is possible."

Did the first Faceless Man actually stand behind the screen? Or had Viana Paizafiume invented an invisible *alter ego*? No one knew, then or ever. However, when at last Paizafiume was assassinated, the plotters were immediately apprehended, sealed into glass balls, and suspended on a cable running between a pair of spires. For a thousand years the balls hung like baubles until one by one they were struck by lightning and destroyed.

For a period the Faceless Man enforced his commands by means of a Coercive Corps, which gradually assumed improper prerogatives and stimulated a revolt. The Conservative Counsel quelled the revolt, disbanded the Coercive Corps, and restored order. The Faceless Man appeared before the counsel in armor of black glass, with a black glass helmet to conceal his identity. He demanded and was conceded greater power and greater responsibility. For twenty years the total energies of Shant were expended in the perfection of the torc system. The Magenta Edict decreed torcs for all and stimulated further strife: the Hundred Years War, which ended only when the last citizen had been clamped into his torc.

Garwiy never regained its Pandamon magnificence, but still was reckoned the first wonder of Durdane. There were towers of blue glass, spires of purple glass, green glass domes, prisms and pillars, walls of clear glass glinting and glittering in the sunlight. At night colored lamps illuminated the city: green lamps behind blue and purple glass, pink lamps behind blue glass.

The palaces up the Ushkadel still housed the patricians of Garwiy, but these were a far cry from the flamboyant grandees of the Pandamon Era. They drew their income from country estates, from shipping, from the laboratories and workshops where torcs, radios, glow-bulbs, a few other electronic devices, were assembled, using components produced elsewhere in Shant: monomolecule conductor strands, semi-organic electron-control devices, magnetic cores of sintered ironweb, a few trifles of copper, gold, silver, lead, for connections and switches. No

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

technician comprehended the circuits he used; whatever the original degree of theoretical knowledge, it now had become lore, a mastery of techniques rather than of principle.

This then was Garwiy: a metropolis of considerable area but no great population, a place of entrancing beauty enhanced by antiquity and the weight of history.

The man of Garwiy was hypercivilized, sensitive to all varieties of aesthetic distinction but not himself particularly creative. He was not deeply moved by music and had no great patience with the traditions of the druitlines or the musical troupes; he preferred facetious ballads, songs with topical references, entertainers with eccentric antics: in short, all the manifestations detested by the musician.

The balloon *Shostrel* sailed through Jardeen Gap and into Garwiy station. Brakes slowed the running dolly; a Judas was snatched to the guys so expertly that the balloon came to the ground in a continuous even motion.

Etzwane alighted, followed by Ifness. With a polite nod Ifness walked off across the station plaza, to turn into Kavalesko Passway, which led under a tower of dark-blue glass ribbed with water-blue pilasters, and into Kavalesko Avenue. Etzwane shrugged, and went his way. So much for Ifness.

Frolitz customarily made resort at Fontenay's Inn, north of the plaza, beside the Jardeen, where the management provided meals and lodging in return for a few evenings of music. To Fontenay's Inn Etzwane now betook himself. He called for stylus and paper and immediately set to work drafting the petition which he planned to submit on the following day.

Two hours later Etzwane finished the document. He gave it a final reading and could find no fault; it seemed clear and uncompromising, with no sacrificing of calm reason. It read:

To the attention of the ANOME:

During my recent visit to the lowlands of the Hwan, in Canton Bastern, I observed the effects of a Roguskhoi raid upon the Chilite community Bashon. Considerable property damage occurred: a tannery and certain outbuildings were demolished. A large number of women were abducted and subsequently killed under distressing circumstances.

It has become well known that the Wildlands of the Hwan are a haven for these noxious savages, who therefore are free to maraud and plunder at will. Each year they wax both in numbers and audacity. It is my opinion that all Roguskhoi now resident in Shant should be destroyed by a stern and un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remitting effort. I suggest that a suitable militia be recruited, trained and armed. Coincidentally, a study should be made of the Roguskhoi, their habits, their preferred resorts. When all is prepared, the militia, using disciplined tactics, should penetrate the Hwan, attack and expunge the Roguskhoi.

In broad outline, this is my petition. I realize that I propose a major governmental operation, but in my opinion such action is necessary.

The time was late afternoon: too late to present the petition. Etzwane crossed the Jardeen and strolled through Pandamon Park, where the north wind sent autumn leaves scurrying past his feet. He came to the Aeolian Hall, a musical instrument of pearl-gray glass three hundred feet long. Wind collected by scoops was directed into a plenum. The operator worked rods and keys to let pent air move one, two, a dozen or a hundred from among the ten thousand sets of glass chimes. A person who wandered the hall experienced audible dimension, with sound coming from various directions: tinkling chords, whispers of vaguely heard melody, thin glassy shiverings, the crystal-pure tones of the center gongs; hurried gusts racing the ceiling like ripples across a pond; fateful chimes, pervasive and melancholy as a sea bell heard through the fog. On occasion the entire ceiling would seem to burst into sound.

With the north wind at its full weight, Etzwane heard the hall at its best. At twilight he crossed the river and dined in one of Garwiy's splendid restaurants. Then in a fretful mood he returned to the inn. He looked into the tavern, which was composed and quiet; no musicians were on hand. Etzwane took himself to bed.

In the morning Etzwane walked to the Bureau of Petitions in Corporation Plaza. As before, the front wall supported a panel of dull purple satin, to which were pinned petitions and the Faceless Man's response. Twenty or thirty folk stood waiting at the five-florin window. They had come from every corner of Shant with their grievances. As they stood in line, they watched the passing folk of Garwiy with truculent expressions. Nearby were more dignified precincts for those earnest enough to buy a hundred-florin petition. At the far end of the building, a door distinguished by a purple star opened into the chamber where the very wealthy or the very vehement bought petitions at a cost of five hundred florins.

Through this latter door marched Etzwane without slackening his stride.

The chamber was empty. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was the single petitioner. Behind the counter a man jumped to his feet. "Your wishes, sir?"

Etzwane brought forth his money. "A petition."

"Very well, sir. A matter of grave importance, no doubt."

"This is my opinion."

The clerk brought forth a magenta document, a pen, a dish of black ink. As Etzwane wrote, the clerk counted the money and prepared a receipt.

Etzwane indited his petition, folded it, tucked it into the envelope provided by the clerk, who, examining Etzwane's torc, noted the color code. "Your name, sir, if it please you?"

"Gastel Etzwane."

"Your native-canton?"

"Bastern."

"Very good, sir, that is sufficient."

"When will I have my response?"

The clerk held wide his hands. "How can I answer? The Anome comes and goes; I know no more of his movements than you. In two or three days you might expect to find your response. It must be posted publicly like all the rest; no one may claim that the Anome performs private favors."

Etzwane went off somewhat less briskly than he had come. The deed was accomplished. He had done all he could; now he must wait upon the decision of the Faceless Man . . . He climbed a flight of green glass steps to a refreshment garden; the flowers, plants, fronds and trees were all simulated of blue, green, white and scarlet glass. At a table overlooking the plaza, he ate a dish of fruit and hard cheese. He ordered wine and was brought a goblet, slender and high as his lips, of pale, cool Pelmonte . . . He felt dull, deflated. He even felt somewhat absurd. Had he been too bombastic? The Faceless Man surely understood every aspect of the problem; the petition would seem brash and callow . . . Etzwane glumly sipped his wine. Five hundred florins gone. For what? Expiation of guilt? So that was it. This flinging down of five hundred florins on a useless petition was the way he punished himself. Five hundred hard-earned florins!

Etzwane compressed his lips. He rubbed his forehead with his fingertips. What was done was done. At all events, the Faceless Man's reply would provide information regarding counter-Roguskhoi measures now in progress.

Etzwane finished his wine and returned to Fontenay's Inn. He found the proprietor in the pot-room with a trio of cronies. He had been testing his own merchandise and had reached a difficult and captious state.

Etzwane asked politely, "Who plays the music here of evenings?"

The proprietor turned his head

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to survey Etzwane from head to toe; he responded curtly: "At the moment no one."

"In that case I wish to apply for the chair."

"Aha. What are your abilities?"

"I am a musician. I often play the khitan."

"A budding young druithine, it seems."

"I do not present myself in such terms," replied Etzwane.

"A singer then, with three chords and as many bogus dialects?"

"I am a musician, not a singer."

One of the cronies, seeing how the wind blew, held up his goblet and looked through the glass at the contents. "New wine is thin; old wine is rich."

"My own opinion exactly," said the proprietor. "A new musician knows too little, has felt too little; remember the great Aladar Szantho? He secluded himself fourteen years. Now, with no reflection upon either your aptitudes or potentialities, how could you interest a mature and knowledgeable company?"

"You will never know until you hear me."

"You refuse to be daunted? Very well, you shall play. I pay nothing unless you attract custom into the tavern, which I doubt."

"I expect no pay," said Etzwane, "other than my board and lodging."

"I can't even agree to that until I hear you. Garwiy is not a city which takes to outland music. If you could hypnotize toads or recite lewd verse or sing topical ballads or roll your eyes in opposite circles, that is another matter."

"I can only play music," said Etzwane. "My fee, if any, I will leave to your generosity. Is there a khitan on the premises?"

"You will find one or two such in the cupboard yonder."

Three days passed. Etzwane played in the pot-room, well enough to amuse the customers and satisfy the proprietor. He attempted no bravura and used the rattle-box with a delicate elbow.

On the third night, with the time growing late, the mood came upon him, and he struck the idle chords of the druithine commencing a reverie. He played a reflective melody and a minor retrospect . . . Music is the result of experience, he thought; he had had sufficient experience to be a musician. Admittedly some of his emotions were raw, and some of his chords were played with his knee too hard against the brilliancy lever. The awareness of this came to Etzwane; he changed, almost in midphrase, to soft, quiet passages . . . He noticed that the company had become attentive; before he had been playing in an abstraction; now he felt self-conscious. Modulating into a set of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conventional chords, he finished . . . He was afraid to raise his eyes and look out over the company. Might they have felt what he felt? Or were they smiling at his excesses? He put down the instrument and stepped from the chair.

To confront Frolitz. Who faced him with a queer half-smile. "The sublime young druithine! Who performs his fantastic surprises at Fontenay's, while his master, poor doddering old Frolitz, prays for his return at Brassei."

"I can explain everything," said Etzwane.

"Your mother is well, I hope?"

"She is dead."

" 'Dead' is a sour word," said Frolitz. He scratched his nose, drank from his mug, looked over his shoulder. "The troupe is here. Shall we play music?"

On the following morning Etzwane went to the Corporation Plaza and across to the Office of Petitions. To the left, gray cards gave answers to the five-florin petitions: adjudications of petty disputes, actions for damage, complaints against local restrictions. In the center, sheets of pale-green parchment, pinned to the board with emerald-glass cabochons, decided hundred-florin actions. At the far right documents of vellum with surrounding bands of black and purple announced responses to the five-hundred-florin petitions. Only three of these were posted on the board.

Etzwane could hardly restrain his strides as he crossed the plaza; the last few steps he almost ran.

He scanned the purple- and black-bordered documents. There:

> For the attention of the gentleman Gastel Etzwane and the other worthy folk who have expressed concern for the Roguskhoi bandits in the Wildlands of the Hwan, the ANOME counsels a calm mien. These disgusting creatures will never dare to venture down from the wilderness; their depredations are not likely to molest folk who make it their business to avoid reckless exposure of themselves and their properties.

Etzwane leaned forward, gaping in disbelief. His hand went to his torc, the unconscious gesture of Shant folk when they reflected in regard to the Faceless Man. He looked again. The statement read exactly as it had originally. With a trembling hand Etzwane reached to claw the document from the display board. He restrained himself. Let it stay. In fact . . .

He brought a stylus from his pocket; he wrote on the parchment:

> The Roguskhoi are murderous beasts: The Faceless Man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

says, ignore them while they kill and plunder.

The Roguskhoi infest our lands. The Faceless Man says, keep out of their way.

Viana Paizafiume would have spoken differently.

Etzwane drew back from the board, suddenly abashed. His act was close to sedition, for which the Faceless Man had little patience. Anger flooded Etzwane again. Sedition, intemperance, insubordination: how could affairs be otherwise? Any man must be prompted to outrage by public policy so bland and irresponsible! He looked around the plaza, in trepidation and defiance. None of the folk nearby paid him any close attention. He noticed a man strolling slowly across the square, head bowed as if in cogitation. It was surely Ifness. He seemed not to have observed Etzwane, though he must have passed only thirty feet from the Petitioners' Board. On an impulse Etzwane ran after him.

Ifness looked around without surprise. He seemed, thought Etzwane, even more placid than usual. Etzwane said, somewhat grimly, "I saw you pass and I thought to pay my respects."

"Thank you," said Ifness. "How go your affairs?"

"Well enough. I am back with Master Frolitz; we play at the Fontenay Inn. You should come by and hear our music."

"A pleasant thought. Unluckily I fear I will be occupied. What of your petition to the Faceless Man, have you had a response?"

Etzwane stared at him stonily, wondering if Ifness enjoyed subterfuge for its own sake; surely Ifness had noticed him at the board! He said carefully, "I bought the petition, at a cost of five hundred florins. The answer has been posted. It is yonder."

He led Ifness to the board. Ifness read with his head thrust slightly forward. "Hmm," said Ifness. Then in a sharp voice: "Who wrote the remarks at the bottom of the sheet?"

"I did."

"What!" Ifness' voice was vibrant. Etzwane had never before seen him exercised. "Do you realize that in the building opposite a telescope is fixed on this board! You scribble your callow and irrelevant complaints, then stalk grandly over to associate me with your scrawling. Do you realize that you are about to lose your head? Now we are both in danger."

Etzwane started to make a hot retort, but Ifness' gesture cut him short. "Act naturally; do not pose or posture. Cross to the Pomegranate Portal; continue slowly along. I must alter certain arrangements."

His head whirling, Etzwane crossed the plaza, moving with as natural a stride as he could mus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter. He looked toward the Aesthetic Corporation offices, from which, so Ifness averred, the board was telescopically monitored. The objective lens might be that particularly lucid glass boss directly opposite the board.

If all were as Ifness declared. At least, thought Etzwane, he had startled Ifness from his supercilious calm.

He passed through the Pomegrante Portal, so called for the festoons of dark scarlet fruit, into Serven Airo Way beyond.

Ifness caught up with him. "It is possible that your act went unnoticed," said Ifness. "But I cannot risk even one chance in ten."

Etzwane, still surly, said, "I understand none of your actions."

"Still you would prefer not to lose your head?" asked Ifness in his most silky voice.

Etzwane gave a noncommittal grunt.

"Here is the situation," said Ifness. "The Faceless Man will shortly learn of your acts. He may well take your head; he has already taken the heads of three persons who have pushed too hard in this connection. I propose to prevent this. Next I intend to learn the identity of the Faceless Man. Then I will urge him to alter his policy."

Etzwane looked at Ifness in awe. "Can you do this?"

"I intend to try. You may be able to assist me."

"Why have you formed such plans? They are surprising!"

"Why did you file a five-hundred-florin petition?"

"You know my motives," said Etzwane stiffly.

"Exactly," said Ifness. "It gives me reason to trust in your participation . . . Walk faster. We are not being followed . . . Turn to the right at the Old Rotunda."

Passing from the city of glass, they walked a quarter mile north along the Avenue of the Thasarene Directors, into a lane shaded by tall blue-green hedges, through a gap to a small cottage of pale-blue tile. Ifness unlocked the door, ushered Etzwane within. "Take off your jacket quickly."

Etzwane sulkily obeyed the instructions. Ifness indicated a couch. "Lie down, on your face."

Again Etzwane obeyed. Ifness wheeled over a table on which rested an assortment of tools. Etzwane rose from the couch to examine them; Ifness curtly told him to lie back. "Now, on your life, do not move."

Ifness switched on a bright light and clamped Etzwane's torc in a small vise. He slipped a metal strip between the torc and Etzwane's neck, then clipped a U-shaped device to the strip. He touched a switch; the device set up a soft hum; Etzwane felt a tingle of vibration. "Electron flow is impeded," said Ifness. "It is safe to open your torc." With a spin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ning razor-sharp wheel he sliced the flexite of the torc along its seam. Putting the tool aside, he split the torc open, then, with a long-nose pliers, he drew forth a length of black soft stuff. "The dexax is removed." With a hooked rod, he worked at the internal lock. The torc fell away from Etzwane's neck.

"You are no longer subject to the control of the Faceless Man," said Ifness.

Etzwane rubbed his neck, which felt thin-skinned and naked. Rising from the couch, he looked slowly from the torc to Ifness. "How did you learn to do this?"

"You will remember the torcs I salvaged on Gargamet Meadow. I studied these with great care." He indicated the interior of Etzwane's torc. "These are the coded receptors; this is a trigger mechanism. If a signal comes through from the Faceless Man, this fiber jerks to detonate the explosive: off comes your head . . . This is the echo relay, which allows the Faceless Man to discover your whereabouts; it is now inoperative. These nodules I believe to be energy accumulators."

He stood frowning down at the device, so long that Etzwane became restless and donned his tunic.

Ifness finally said, "If I were the Faceless Man, I might well suspect a cabal, of which Gastel Etzwane was not the most important member. I would not instantly take Etzwane's head, but I would use the echo circuit to locate him and investigate his activities."

"That seems reasonable enough," said Etzwane grudgingly.

"On this basis," said Ifness, "I will attach a signal to your torc; if and when the Faceless Man tries to locate you, we will be warned." He busied himself. "When he receives no return signal, he must assume that you have left the district, and we will have verified his interest in Gastel Etzwane. Above all, I do not wish to alarm him, or put him on his guard."

Etzwane asked the question which long had been at the front of his mind. "What, in fact, are your wishes?"

"I hardly know," Ifness murmured. "My perplexity is greater than your own."

Sudden illumination came to Etzwane. "You are a Palasedran! You came to observe the work of the Roguskhoi!"

"Not true." Ifness, seating himself on a couch, regarded Etzwane with a passionless gaze. "Like yourself, I wonder at the Roguskhoi and the Faceless Man's unconcern. Like yourself, I have been prompted to action. It is no less illicit for me than for you."

"What kind of action do you plan?" Etzwane asked cautiously.

"My first goal must be to iden-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tify the Faceless Man,'" said Ifness. "After that I will be guided by events."

"If you are not Palasedran, what are you? Certainly no man of Shant."

Ifness leaned back on the couch, an expression of intense boredom on his face. "With churlish persistence you press for information I quite clearly do not wish to extend. Since your cooperation now becomes useful, I am forced to make certain disclosures. You have discerned that I am not a man of Shant. I am, in fact, an Earthman, a Fellow of the Historical Institute. Are you any the wiser?"

Etzwane surveyed him with a fierce gaze. "Earth is a real place?"

"Very real indeed."

"Why are you here in Shant?"

Ifness spoke in a patient voice. "The folk who came to Durdane nine thousand years ago were secretive and eccentric; they marooned themselves and sank their spaceships in the Purple Ocean. On Earth Durdane is long forgotten—except by the Historical Institute. I am the latest in a succession of Fellows resident upon Durdane—and possibly the first to ignore the First Law of the Institute: Fellows may never interfere in the affairs of the worlds they study. We are organized as a fact-gathering association, and we so restrict ourselves. My conduct in regard to the Faceless Man is absolutely illicit; in the purview of the Institute I am a criminal."

"My motives need not concern yourself?" Etzwane demanded. "Because of the Roguskhoi raids?"

"My motives need not concern you. Your interests, so far as they go, are concurrent with mine; I do not care to be more explicit."

Etzwane ran his hand through his hair and sank down upon the couch, opposite that on which Ifness sat. "These are great surprises." He warily studied Ifness. "Are there other Earthmen on Durdane?"

Ifness replied in the negative. "The Historical Institute spreads its personnel thin."

"How do you move between here and Earth?"

"Again, this is information I prefer to keep to myself."

Before Etzwane could make an irritated reply, his torc produced a sharp buzzing sound. Ifness jumped to his feet; in one long stride he was at the torc. The buzzing stopped, to leave a silence which had a weighty and sinister quality of its own. Somewhere, thought Etzwane, the Faceless Man had turned frowning away from his instruments.

"Excellent!" Ifness declared. "The Faceless Man is interested in you. We will persuade him to reveal himself."

"All very well," said Etzwane, "but how?"

"A tactical exercise, which we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will discuss presently. At the moment I wish to resume the business which your presence in the plaza interrupted . . . I was about to dine."

The two returned the way they had come, to the Corporation Plaza; here they kept to the peripheral arcade, beyond the purview of the observer in the Corporation Center. Etzwane looked toward the Office of Petitions; the purple- and black-bordered document was no longer to be seen. He informed Ifness of the fact.

"Another evidence of the Anome's sensitivity," said Ifness in an abstracted voice. "Our work will be the easier on this account."

"How so?" demanded Etzwane, ever more irritated by Ifness' condescension.

Ifness looked sidewise with raised eyebrows and spoke in a patient voice. "We must induce the Faceless Man to reveal himself. A quail cannot be seen until it moves; so with the Faceless Man. We must generate a situation which he will wish to inspect in his own person, rather than relying upon his Benevolences. The fact of his sensitivity makes such a reaction more likely."

Etzwane gave a sardonic grunt. "Just so. What situation do we generate?"

"It is a matter we must discuss. First, let us dine."

They seated themselves in the loggia of the Old Pagane Restaurant; their meal was set before them. Ifness stinted himself nothing; Etzwane, unsure whether or not he might be required to pay his own score, dined less lavishly. In the end, however, Ifness laid down money for both meals, and leaned back to sip the dessert wine. "Now, to our business. The Faceless Man returned a polite response to your five hundred florins and in fact evinced interest only when you noted your dissatisfaction. This calibrates one of our parameters."

Etzwane wondered where all this was leading.

Ifness mused: "We must act within bounds of Garwiy law, to give the Aesthetic Corporation no pretext for action . . . Perhaps we will offer an informative lecture on the Roguskhoi and promise startling revelations. The Faceless Man has demonstrated his concern in regard to this subject; in all probability he will be interested enough to attend."

Etzwane agreed that such a contingency was possible. "But who will give such a lecture?"

"That is a matter to be carefully considered," said Ifness. "Let us return to the cottage. Again I must modify your torc, so that it becomes a tool of aggression rather than a mere warning device."

In the cottage once more, Ifness worked two hours upon the modi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fication of Etzwane's torc. At last he completed his work. A pair of inconspicuous wires now led to a coil of fifty turns tied down upon a square of stiff fiberboard. "This is a directional antenna," said Ifness. "You will wear the coil under your shirt. Warning signals inside the torc will notify you when an attempt is being made either to locate you or to take your head. By turning, you will maximize the signals and thus determine their direction. Allow me now to place the torc around your neck."

Etzwane submitted without enthusiasm. "It seems," he grumbled, "that I am to function as bait."

Ifness allowed himself a frosty smile. "Something of the sort. Now listen carefully. The explosive impulse you will feel as a vibration against the back of your neck. The locator pulse will be received as a vibration at the right side. In either case, turn until you maximize the vibration. The source will then be directly in front of you."

Etzwane nodded grimly. "And what of you?"

"I will carry a similar device. With luck we should be able to strike a fix upon our subject."

"And what if we are unlucky?"

"This, to be frank, is my expectation. Such facile success is too much to hope for. We may startle our quail on this occasion, but other quail may move as well and so confuse us. But I will carry my camera; we will at least have an exact record of the occasion."

Chapter 10

At those places throughout Garwiy designated for the display of public announcements appeared large and dramatic placards printed in brown and black on white paper with a yellow border: colors to signify dire and fateful import, with overtones of the sensationally macabre.

THE ROGUSKHOI EXPOSED!

Who are these horrid savages, who ravage and rape, who torment our land? Where do they come from? What is their plan?

AN ANONYMOUS ADVENTURER JUST RETURNED FROM THE HWAN WILL REVEAL STARTLING FACTS AND EVEN MORE STARTLING SUSPICIONS. WHO SHARES THE BLAME FOR THIS INFESTATION? YOU WILL HEAR AN AMAZING ACCUSATION!

MIDAFTERNOON KYALISDAY
AT THE PUBLIC PAVILION
IN PANDAMON PARK

On a hundred bulletin boards the placards were posted, and even the folk of Garwiy took notice, reading the placards once, twice, a third time. Ifness was pleased with the effect. "The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faceless Man will not ignore this. Yet we give neither him nor the Corporation cause to interfere."

Etzwane said sourly, "I'd rather that you were the 'anonymous adventurer'."

Ifness laughed. "What? The talented Gastel Etzwane uncomfortable before an audience? What happens when you play one of your instruments?"

"That is different."

"Possibly so. But as the 'anonymous adventurer' I could not use my camera. You have memorized the material?"

"As much as needs be," growled Etzwane. "In all candor, I dislike acting as your cat's-paw. I do not care to be seized by the Discriminators* and clapped off to Stonebreakers' Island, while you dine at the Old Pagane."

"Unlikely," said Ifness. "Not impossible, but unlikely."

Etzwane merely grunted. As an 'anonymous adventurer' he wore a bulky cape of black fur, square and wide across the shoulders, and sand-colored breeches and black boots: the garments of a Canton Shkorniy mountaineer. The medallion of his torc showed at his neck; the designation 'musician' was not at odds with the role of 'adventurer'. Slender, taut, with a keen, quick-featured face, Gastel Etzwane cut a gallant figure in the mountaineer's costume; insensibly it affected his stride, his mannerisms, his mode of thought. He had become in fact the 'anonymous adventurer'. Ifness, wearing dark gray trousers, a loose white shirt, a soft gray jacket, was as usual. If Ifness felt any emotion, he gave no indication; Etzwane found it difficult to control his nervousness.

"A half hour to the midafternoon chime," said Ifness. "A fair number of folk are about; all idle wanderers, or so I suspect. No person of Garwiy is early for an event. Those who come to hear the scandal will arrive one minute before the chime."

"What if none arrive?" asked Etzwane in melancholy hopefulness.

"There will be some," said Ifness, "including the Faceless Man, who cannot be happily anticipating the occasion. He may even post a Discriminator to discourage the speech. I suspect, however, that he will listen, then act as circumstances dictate. We must stimulate him to push his 'Explode' button."

"And when I retain my head?"

"The torc circuits must occasionally fail; he will conclude that such is the case and send forth other impulses. Remember the signal I have stipulated."

"Yes, yes," muttered Etzwane. "I hope he doesn't become dissatisfied with his explosive and shoot me with a gun."

"A risk we must take . . . The

*Avistioi: literally, 'nice discriminators': the constabulary of the Aesthetic Corporation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time is still twenty minutes to the chime. Let us stand in the shadows yonder and rehearse the terms of your address."

The midafternoon chime sounded. From the foliage came the 'anonymous adventurer'. Looking neither right nor left, walking with something of a swagger, he approached the rostrum. He went to the rear, climbed the white-glass steps and approached the lectern. He stopped short, to study the magenta-bordered notice on the green-glass surface.

It was the Faceless Man's reaction, and it read:

> Your advertisement has excited the interest of the ANOME himself. He requests discretion, that you may not jeopardize certain very sensitive investigations. The ANOME's opinion is this: the Roguskhoi are a nuisance, a tribe of disreputable folk already on the decline. A person properly informed will stress the minor and transitory aspects of the matter, or he might even wish to discuss a subject of more general interest.

Etzwane put down the notice. He examined the faces which had collected around the rostrum. A hundred persons stood watching; as many more sat on benches: too many, thought Etzwane. To the left stood Ifness; he had pulled a merchant's hood over his soft white hair, and by some peculiar alteration of pose now seemed one with the others. Did the Faceless Man stand among the people present? Etzwane looked from face to face. There: that hollow-cheeked man with the lank black hair and burning eyes. Or that small man yonder with the high round forehead, the delicate mouth. Or the handsome Aesthete in the green cloak with the neat fringe of black beard along his jaw. Or the stern man in the plum-colored habit of the Eclectic Godhead. Others, still others . . .

Etzwane wasted a moment or two longer, steeling himself to immobility. The audience had now assembled. Etzwane leaned forward and began to speak, and because of the Faceless Man's notice he altered his remarks.

"In my advertisements I promised remarkable information; this I will provide: immediately." He help up the magenta-bordered notice. "The illustrious Anome himself has demonstrated an interest in my remarks. Listen to his advice!" Etzwane read the notice in a studiously solemn voice; when he looked up he saw that he had indeed interested his audience; they gazed at him in wonder. Ifness, so Etzwane saw, studied the crowd with care. He carried an almost invisible camera and took pictures.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etzwane frowned at the document. "I am pleased that the Anome considers my ideas significant, especially since his other informants clearly have misled him. 'A minor and transitory' nuisance? The Anome should take the head of the man who so deceived him. The Roguskhoi threaten everyone who now hears me. They are not 'a tribe of disreputable folk'—as the Anome innocently believes. They are ruthless, well-armed warriors, and they are sexual maniacs as well. Do you know their habit? They do not copulate normally; instead they seed a woman with a dozen imps which are born while she sleeps, and never again can she bear a human child—though she can bear another dozen imps. Every woman alive in Garwiy now may conceivably mother a brood or two of Roguskhoi imps.

"The Hwan Wildlands swarm with Roguskhoi. In the cantons bordering the Hwan it is an accepted fact that the Roguskhoi have been sent from Palasedra.

"The situation is remarkable, is it not? Reputable folk have implored the Anome to destroy these terrible creatures. He refuses; in fact, he takes their heads. Why? Ask yourself. Why does the Faceless Man, our protector, scoff at this peril?"

Vibrations jarred at the back of Etzwane's neck: the explosive circuit. The Faceless Man was angry. Etzwane swung around to maximize the vibrations. They ceased before he could make a fix as to their direction. He clenched his left hand: the signal to Ifness.

Ifness nodded and studied the crowd with even more intense interest than before.

Etzwane spoke on: "Why does the Faceless Man deprecate so imminent a threat? Why does he write a document urging me to 'discretion'? Friends, I ask a question; I do not answer it. Is the Faceless Man—"

The vibrations struck again. Etzwane swung around, but again could not decide upon the source of the pulses. He looked straight at the cold-eyed man in green, who stared back at him, gravely intent.

The directional antenna, at least with respect to the killer pulses, was a failure. It was pointless to provoke the Faceless Man to a state where he might use a weapon less subtle. Etzwane modified the tone of his discourse. "The question I wish to ask is this. Has the Faceless Man become old? Has he lost his zest? Should he perhaps pass on his responsibilities to a man with more energy and decision?"

Etzwane looked around the group, to see who responded to the question. Here he was disappointed; the folk in the audience all looked around as well, more interested in the others

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than themselves. (They knew their own ideas; how did the others feel?)

Etzwane spoke on in a voice of spurious docility. He held up the magenta-bordered notice. "In deference to the Anome, I will reveal no more secrets. I may say that I am not alone in my concern; I speak for a group of persons dedicated to the safety of Shant. I go now to make my report. In a week I will speak again, when I hope to recruit others into this group."

Etzwane jumped down from the rostrum and to avoid idle questions set off at a brisk pace in the direction from which he had come. As he walked he touched the switch in his torc, to activate the echo circuit. From the shelter of the foliage he looked back. The Aesthete in green strolled after him without haste. Behind the Aesthete, no less casual, came Ifness . . . Etzwane turned, hurried on. A vibration struck against the right side of his neck: someone had sent out a questing radiation.

Etzwane went directly to the blue-tile cottage north of Garwiy.

As he went down Elemyra Way, east of the Corporation Plaza, his torc vibrated a second time, again as he entered the Avenue of the Thasarene Directors, again as he turned down the hedge-shaded lane. Once within the cottage Etzwane slipped out of the clumsy back cloak, unclasped the torc and set it on the table. Leaving the cottage by the back door, he went to where he could survey the road.

Half an hour passed. Along the lane came a man in a hooded dark-green cloak. His eyes were very keen; he looked constantly right and left, and occasionally down at an object he held in his hand. At the gap in the hedge he stopped short, the instrument in his hand resonating to the pulse echoed from Etzwane's torc inside the cottage.

Stealthy as a thief the man looked up and down the lane, peered along the path at the cottage; slipping quickly through the gap, he took shelter behind a lime tree. Here stood Etzwane, who sprang forward. The man was enormously strong; Etzwane clung with feet and one arm and with the other slapped the man on the side of the neck with the needle-sack Ifness had supplied.

Almost at once the man's activity lessened; a moment later he fell to his hands and knees.

Ifness appeared; the two carried the limp body into the cottage. Ifness, instantly setting to work, removed the man's torc. Etzwane switched the echo circuit of his torc to 'Off'.

Ifness gave an exclamation of dissatisfaction and drew forth a tube of black explosive, which he regarded with vast displeasure.

The man had regained con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sciousness to find his arms and wrists bound. "You are not the Faceless Man," said Ifness.

"I never claimed to be," said the captive in a cool voice.

"Who are you, then?"

"I am the Aesthete Garstang: a director of the Corporation."

"It seems that you serve the Faceless Man."

"As do all of us."

"You more than the rest, to judge by your conduct, and by this control box." From the table Ifness picked up the instrument he had taken from Garstang's cloak: a metal box, three inches wide, an inch deep, four inches long. From the top of the case protruded a set of studs, each a different color. The ten squares of a read-out below displayed the colors of Etzwane's torc.

Below the read-out, on one hand, was a yellow switch, the yellow of death. On the other was a red switch, the red of invisibility: in his case the red of the invisible person being sought.

Ifness set the box on the table. "How do you explain this?"

"It explains itself."

"The yellow button?" Ifness raised his eyebrows.

"Destroy."

"The red button?"

"Find."

"And your exact status?"

"I am what you already know me to be: a Benevolence of the Faceless Man."

"When are you expected to make your report?"

"In an hour or so." Garstang's answers came easily, in a voice without intonation.

"You report in person?"

Garstang gave a chilly laugh. "Hardly. I report into an electric voice-wire; I receive my instructions by postal delivery, or through the same voice-wire."

"How many Benevolences are employed?"

"Another besides myself, or so I believe."

"The two Benevolences and the Faceless Man carry boxes such as this?"

"I don't know what the others carry."

Etzwane asked, "The Faceless Man and two Benevolences—only three persons—police all Shant?"

Garstang gave a disinterested shrug. "The Faceless Man could do the job alone, had he a mind."

For a moment there was silence. Ifness and Etzwane studied their captive, who returned the inspection with eyebrows raised in debonair unconcern. Etzwane asked, "Why won't the Faceless Man move against the Roguskhoi?"

"I have no more knowledge than you."

Etzwane said in a brittle voice, "For a man so near to death, you are very easy."

Garstang seemed surprised. "I see no cause to fear death."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You tried to take my life. Why should I not take yours?"

Garstang gave him a stare of disdainful puzzlement. "I did not try to take your life. I had no such orders."

Ifness held up his hand urgently to still Etzwane's angry retort. "What in fact were your orders?"

"I was to attend the meeting in Pandamon Park; I was to note the speaker's code and follow him to his place of residence; I was there to gather information."

"But you were not instructed to take the speaker's head?"

Garstang started to reply, then turned shrewd, quick glances first toward Etzwane, then Ifness. A change seemed to come over his face. "Why do you ask?"

"Someone attempted to take my head," said Etzwane. "If it wasn't you, it was the Faceless Man."

Garstang shrugged, calculated. "That may well be. But it has nothing to do with me."

"Perhaps not," said Ifness politely. "But now there is no more time for conversation. We must prepare to meet whomever comes to find you. Please turn your back."

Garstang slowly rose to his feet. "What do you plan to do?"

"I will anesthetize you. In a short time, if all goes well, you will be released."

In response Garstang flung himself sideways. He raised his leg in a grotesque prancing gait. "Look out!" screamed Etzwane. "He wears a leg-gun!"

Fire! Glare! Explosion through the cuffs of Garstang's elegant trousers; the tinkle of broken glass; then the thud of Garstang's dead body falling to the floor. Ifness, who had crouched, snatched and fired his hand-gun, stood looking down at the corpse. Etzwane had never seen him so agitated. "I have soiled myself," hissed Ifness. "I have killed what I swore to preserve."

Etzwane gave a snort of disgust. "Here you sob over this dead murderer, but on other occasions, when you might have saved someone, you looked aside."

Ifness turned him a yellow-eyed glare, then, after a moment, spoke in a calm and even voice. "The deed is done . . . What impelled him to act so desperately? He was helpless." For a moment he stood musing. "Many mysteries remain," he muttered. "Much is obscure." He made a peremptory gesture. "Search the body, drag it to the back shed. I must modify his torc."

An hour later Ifness stood back. "In addition to the explode and echo circuits, I discovered a simple vibrator signal as well. I have installed an alarm, to inform us when someone seeks Garstang. This time should not be far distant." He went to the door. The suns had rolled behind the Ushka-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

del; the soft dusk of Garwiy, suffused with a million colored glooms, settled over the land. "Before us now is a problem in tactics," said Ifness. "First, what have we achieved? A great deal, it seems to me. Garstang convincingly denies all attempts to take your head, hence we may reasonably put the onus for these acts upon the Faceless Man. We may affirm, therefore, that he came to Pandamon Park, and into the range of my camera. If we chose, we might attempt to identify and investigate each of the two hundred persons present—a tedious prospect, however.

"Secondly, what can we next expect of the Faceless Man? He awaits Garstang's report. In view of his failure to take the 'anonymous adventurer's' head, he will be curious, to say the least. Lacking news, he will become first annoyed, then concerned. I would guess that Garstang's report was due an hour ago; we can expect a signal to Garstang's torc in the near future. Garstang of course will not respond. The Faceless Man must then either send forth another Benevolence or go himself to find Garstang, using the locator-pulses.

"We have, in fact, a situation analogous to that of this morning. Instead of the 'anonymous adventurer' and his threatened sedition, we now have Garstang's torc to stimulate our quail into motion."

Etzwane gave a grudging acquiescence. "I suppose that this is reasonable enough."

Garstang's torc emitted a thin clear sound, eerily disturbing the silence, followed by four staccato chirping noises.

Ifness gave a fateful nod. "There: the signal to report at once, or perhaps to make a responsive signal . . . Time we were moving. The cottage gives us no advantage." He dropped Garstang's torc into a soft black case, and then after reflecting a moment added a handful of his exquisite tools.

"If we don't hurry, we'll have the Discriminators around our ears," grumbled Etzwane.

"Yes, we must hurry. Switch off the echo circuit in your torc, if you have not already done so."

"I have done so, long since."

The two departed the cottage and walked toward Garwiy's complicated skyline. Beyond, along the Ushkadel, a thousand palaces glittered and sparkled. Trudging through the dark with Ifness, Etzwane felt like a ghost walking with another ghost; they were two creatures on an eerie errand, estranged from all other folk of Shant . . . "Where are we going?"

Ifness said mildly, "To a public house, a tavern, something of the sort. We will put Garstang's torc in a secluded spot and watch to see who goes to investigate."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etzwane could find no fault with the idea. "Fontenay's is yonder, along the river. Frolitz and the troupe will be there."

"As good as any. You, at least, will be provided the camouflage of your instrument."

Chapter 11

Music came through the open door of Fontenay's. Etzwane recognized the fluid lower-register of Frolitz' wood horn, the graceful touch of Fordyce's khitan, Mielke's grave bass tones; he felt a deprivation so great that tears came to his eyes. His previous life, so miserly and pinched, with every florin into his lock-box, now seemed sweet indeed!

They entered and stood in the shadows to the side of the door. Ifness surveyed the premises. "What is that door?"

"It leads to Fontenay's private quarters."

"What about the hall yonder?"

"It leads to the stairs and a back door."

"And what about that door behind Frolitz?"

"It leads into a storeroom, where the musicians leave their instruments."

"It should serve. Take Garstang's torc, go into the storeroom for your instrument, and hang the torc somewhere near the door. Then when you come forth—" from within the black bag Garstang's torc produced the whine of the locator circuit. "Someone soon will be here. When you come forth, take a place near the storeroom door. I will sit in this corner. If you notice anything significant, look toward me, then turn your left ear toward what you notice. Do this several times, in case I do not see you the first time, as I will be busy otherwise . . . Again, where is the rear entrance?"

"Down the hall, past the stairs and to the right."

Ifness nodded. "You are now a musician, a part of the troupe . . . Don't forget the torc."

Etzwane took the torc, tucked it into his inside pocket. He sauntered up to Frolitz, who gave him an indifferent nod. Etzwane recalled that he had been parted from the troupe only a single day. It seemed as if a month had passed. He went into the storeroom, hung the torc on a peg near the door, and covered it with someone's old jacket. He found his khitan, his tringolet, his beautiful silver-mounted wood horn and brought them out to the musician's platform. Finding a chair, he seated himself only a yard from the door. Ifness still sat in the corner of the room; with his mild expression he might have been a merchant's clerk; no one would look at him twice. Etzwane, playing with the troupe, was merged even more completely into the en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vironment . . . Etzwane smiled sourly. The stalking of the Faceless Man was not without its ludicrous aspects.

With Etzwane present, Fordyce put aside his khitan and took up the bass clarion; Frolitz jerked his head in satisfaction.

Etzwane played with only a quarter of his mind. His faculties seemed magnified, hypersensitized. Every sound in the room reached his ears: every tone and quaver of music, the tinkle of glasses, the thud of mugs, the laughter and conversation. And from the storeroom an almost petulant whine from Garstang's torc. Etzwane glanced toward the far corner of the room; catching Ifness' eye, he reached up his hand as if to tune the khitan and gave a jerk of his thumb back toward the storeroom. Ifness nodded in comprehension.

The music halted. Frolitz turned around. "We will play that old piece of Anatoly's; you, Etzwane—" Frolitz explained a variation on the harmony. The barman brought up mugs of beer; the musicians refreshed themselves. Etzwane thought: here was a life worth living, easy, relaxed, not a worry in the world. Except for the Roguskhoi and the Faceless Man. He lifted his mug and drank. Frolitz gave a sign; the music started. Etzwane let his fingers move of themselves; his attention wandered around the room. Fontenay tonight did good business; the tables were occupied. The mulberry glass bosses high in the dark-blue glass wall admitted a glow from the lights outside. Over the bar hung a pair of soft white glow-bulbs. Etzwane looked everywhere, studying everyone: the folk coming through the door, Aljamo with fingers tapping the marimba-boards, the prettty girl who had come to sit at a nearby table, Frolitz now stroking a tipple, Ifness . . . Who among these people would know him now for the 'anonymous adventurer' who had so disturbed the Faceless Man?

Etzwane thought of his past life. He had known much melancholy; his only pleasure had come from music. His gaze wandered to the pretty girl he had noticed before: an Aesthete, from the Ushkadel, or so he assumed. She wore clothes of elegant simplicity: a gown of dark scarlet-rose, a fillet of silver with a pair of rock crystals dangling past her ear, a curious jeweled belt, slippers of rose satin and pink glass. She was dark haired, with a clever, grave face; never had Etzwane seen anyone so captivating. She felt his gaze and looked at him. Etzwane looked away, but now he played to her, with new concentration and intensity . . . Never had he played so richly, with such lilting phrases, such poignant chords . . . Frolitz gave him a half-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sneering side-glance, as if wordlessly asking, "What's got into you?" . . . The girl leaned to whisper to her escort, whom Etzwane had hardly noticed: a man of early middle age, apparently also an Aesthete. Behind Etzwane the torc gave a thin whine. reminding him of his responsibilities.

The Aesthete girl and her escort moved to a table directly in front of Etzwane, the escort glum-faced and bored.

The music halted. The girl spoke to Etzwane, "You play very well."

"Yes," said Etzwane with a modest smile. "I suppose I do."

He looked toward Ifness, to find him frowning disapproval. Ifness had wished that particular table, close by the storeroom left vacant. Etzwane again made the quick signal with his thumb toward the torc. Ifness nodded distantly.

Frolitz spoke over his shoulder, "The Merrydown." He jerked his head to give a beat; the music came forth, a rollicking quick-step, up and down, with unexpected halts and double-beats. Etzwane's part was mainly a strong and urgent chord progression; he was able to watch the girl . . . She improved upon proximity. She gave off a subtle fragrance; her skin had a clean glow; she knew the uses of beauty as Etzwane knew the meaning of music. He thought with a sudden inner ferocity, "I want her; I must have her for my own." He looked at her and his intent showed clear in his eyes. She raised her eyebrows and turned to speak to her escort.

The music ended; the girl paid no more heed to Etzwane. She seemed uneasy. She settled her fillet, adjusted her belt . . . Behind Etzwane came the thin whine of the circuit. The girl jerked to stare. "What is that?" she asked Etzwane.

Etzwane pretended to listen. "I hear nothing."

"Is someone in there, making peculiar sounds?"

"Perhaps a musician rehearsing."

"You are joking." Her face was alive with—humor? Alert mischief? Etzwane wondered.

"Someone is ill," she suggested. "You had better investigate."

"If you'll come in with me."

"No, thank you." She turned to her escort, who gave Etzwane a glance of haughty warning. Etzwane looked toward Ifness, and meeting his gaze, turned to look fixedly toward Frolitz, who stood to his right. His left ear indicated the table in front of him.

Ifness nodded without overmuch interest, or so it seemed to Etzwane.

Into the tavern came four men, wearing mauve and gray uniforms: Discriminators. One spoke loudly, "Your attention! A disturb-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ance has been reported in this building. In the name of the Corporation, I order no one to move."

Etzwane glimpsed the twitch of Ifness' hand. Two reports, two flashes: the glow-bulbs burst. Darkness and confusion came suddenly to Fontenay's tavern. Etzwane made a lunge. He felt the girl, caught her up, carried her in front of Frolitz, into the hall. She tried to scream. Etzwane clapped his hand over her mouth. "Not a sound if you know what's good for you!" She kicked and struck at him; her noises were drowned by hoarse shouts in the tavern proper.

Etzwane staggered to the back door; he groped for the latch, opened the door, carried the writhing, kicking girl out into the night. Here he paused, let her feet swing to the ground. She tried to kick him. Etzwane twisted her around, held her arms in a lock. "No noise," he growled in her ear.

"What are you doing to me?" she cried.

"Keeping you safe from the raid. Such affairs are great inconveniences."

"You are the musician!"

"Exactly."

"Let me go back. I don't fear the Discriminators."

"What idiocy!" Etzwane exclaimed. "Now that we are free of that tiresome man you sat with, we can go elsewhere."

"No, no, no!" Her voice was more confident, even somewhat amused. "You are gallant and bold—but I must go back into the tavern."

"You may not," said Etzwane. "Come with me, and please make no trouble."

The girl once more became alarmed. "Where are you taking me?"

"You'll see."

"No, no! I—" Someone came behind. Etzwane turned, ready to drop the girl and defend himself. Ifness spoke, "Are you there?"

"Yes. With a captive."

Ifness approached. In the dim light of the back alley he peered at the girl. "Whom do you have?"

"I can't say for sure. She wears a peculiar belt. I suggest you take it."

"No!" cried the girl in an astounded voice.

Ifness unclasped the belt. "We had best be away, and swiftly." He told the girl, "Do not make a scene of any sort; do not scream or try to attract attention, or we will use you roughly. Is that understood?"

"Yes," she said huskily.

Each taking one of the girl's arms, they set off through the back streets, and in due course came to the blue-tile cottage. Ifness unlocked the door; they entered.

Ifness pointed to a couch. "Please sit."

The girl wordlessly obeyed. Ifness examined the belt. "Curious indeed."

"So I thought. I noticed her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

touch the red stud whenever the alarm sounded."

"You are observant," said Ifness. "I thought you were interested otherwise. Be careful of her; remember Garstang's leg-gun."

Etzwane went to stand by the girl. "No Faceless Man then—but a Faceless Woman."

The girl made a scornful sound. "You are mad."

Ifness said gently, "Please turn and lay face down on the couch. Excuse me while I search for a weapon." He did so with thoroughness. The girl cried out in indignation; Etzwane looked away. "No weapons," said Ifness.

"You need only to have asked," said the girl. "I would have told you."

"You are not otherwise candid."

"You have asked no questions."

"I shall, in a few minutes." He rolled over his worktable, adjusted the vise to grip the girl's torc. "Do not move or I will be forced to anesthetize you." He worked with his tools, opened her torc. Reaching with his long-nose pliers, he removed a tube of explosive. "No Faceless Man, nor Faceless Woman either," he told Etzwane. "You seized the wrong individual."

"This is what I tried to tell you," cried the girl in a voice of desperate hope. "It's all a terrible mistake. I am of the Xhiallinen, and I want nothing to do with you or your intrigues."

Ifness, making no response, worked further on the torc. "The echo circuit is dead. You cannot now be located. We can relax and test your vaunted candor. You are of the Xhiallinen family?"

"I am Jurjin of Xhiallinen." The girl spoke sullenly.

"And why do you wear this belt?"

"For the most simple reason imaginable: vanity."

Ifness went to the cupboard and returned with a small sack, which he pressed to the girl's neck: sides, nape, and front. She looked at him in apprehension. "It is wet . . . what did you do to me?"

"The liquid penetrates your skin and enters your blood. In a moment it will reach your brain and paralyze a certain small organ. Then we will talk further."

Jurjin's face became rueful and anxious. Etzwane watched her in morbid fascination, wondering as to the details of her existence. She wore her gown with flair and ease; she used the manners of the Garwiy patricians; her coloring was that of the Garwiy race. But her features showed a trace of some foreign strain. Xhiallinen, one of the Fourteen Families, was ancient, and if anything inbred . . . Jurjin spoke. "I will tell you the truth voluntarily, while I still can think. I wear the belt because the Anome required service of me, and I could not refuse."

"What was the service?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"To act as a Benevolence."

"Who are the other Benevolences?"

"There is only Garstang of Allinginen."

"Might there not be others?"

"I am certain that there are none."

"You, Garstang and the Faceless Man controlled the whole of Shant?"

"The cantons and the cities are ruled by their particular leaders. It is only necessary to control these folk. One alone could do this."

Etzwane started to speak, then controlled his voice. These slim hands must have pressed the yellow stud of her belt; she must often have seen the heads of men disappear. He did not care to know how many times. He turned away with a heavy feeling in his throat.

"Who," asked Ifness ingenuously, "is the Faceless Man?"

"I don't know. He is as faceless to me as he is to you."

Ifness asked, "The box Garstang carried, and your belt, are they guarded against unauthorized use?"

"Yes. Gray must be pressed before the colors are coded."

Ifness leaned forward, inspected her eyes, and gave a slight nod. "Why did you summon the Discriminators to Fontenay's?"

"I did not summon them."

"Who did?"

"The Faceless Man, I suppose."

"Who was your escort?"

"The Second of Curnainen, Matheleno."

"Is he the Faceless Man?"

Jurjin's face showed a flicker of astonishment. "Matheleno? How could he be so?"

"Have you received orders from the Faceless Man regarding him?"

"No."

"He is your lover?"

"The Faceless Man said I might take no lovers." Jurjin's voice began to slur; her eyelids drooped.

"Was the Faceless Man at Fontenay's Tavern?"

"I am not sure. I think he was there and noticed something which impelled him to call in the Discriminators."

"What could that have been?"

"Spies."

"Spies from where?"

"From Palasedra." Jurjin's voice came slowly; her eyes took on a curious blank stare.

Ifness spoke sharply, "Why should he fear Palasedrans?"

Jurjin's voice was an unintelligible mutter; her eyes closed.

She slept. Ifness stood looking down in annoyance.

Etzwane looked from Ifness to the girl and back to Ifness. "What troubles you?"

"Her lapse into coma came swiftly. Too swiftly."

Etzwane peered into the girl's calm face. "She could not feign such a thing?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No." Ifness bent over Jurjin's face. He scrutinized each of her features, opened her mouth, peered within. "Hmm."

"What do you see?"

"Nothing conclusive, or even suggestive."

Etzwane turned away, his mind inhabited only by doubts and uncertainties. He straightened the girl's body on the couch and drew a shawl over her. Ifness watched with brooding detachment.

"What do we do now?" Etzwane asked. He no longer felt antagonism toward Ifness; such an emotion seemed pointless.

Ifness stirred, as if rousing from a reverie. "We return to a consideration of the Faceless Man and his identity—though for a fact other mysteries seem more cogent."

"Other mysteries?" Etzwane asked, uncomfortably aware that he must seem numb and stupid.

"There are several. First I might cite the Roguskhoi scimitars. Then Garstang, for no clear or good reason, attempts a desperate attack. Jurjin of Xhiallinen lapses into a coma as if her brain had been turned off. And the Faceless Man resists, not passively but actively, all demonstrations against the Roguskhoi. All seem guided by a transcendent policy beyond our present imagination."

"It is very strange," muttered Etzwane.

"Were the Roguskhoi human we might reconcile these grotesque acts with simple treachery, but the concept of Garstang and Jurjin of Xhiallinen plotting with the Roguskhoi is sheer insanity."

"Not if the Roguskhoi are Palasedran freaks, sent here to destroy us."

"The theory is arguable," said Ifness, "until someone troubles to examine the physiology of the Roguskhoi, and considers their reproductive methods. Then doubt is renewed. However—to the lesser mystery. Who is the Faceless Man? We have thrown two stones; the quail has made two startled motions. To recapitulate. We are told with authority that the Anome employed only two Benevolences. Jurjin was not at Pandamon Park, yet an attempt was made to take your head. We must credit this attempt to the Faceless Man. Garstang was not at Fontenay's, still someone summoned the Discriminators: again we must hold the Faceless Man responsible. I took photographs at both locations; if we find a person common to both—well, let's see what the Laws of Probability have to tell us. I believe that I can quote precise odds. There are roughly two hundred thousand adults in this immediate area, of which two hundred heard the 'anonymous adventurer'—not a large turnout: one in each thousand persons. A similar number might have come to Fontenay's to enjoy the music of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frolitz' troupe: only about a hundred, or one in each two thousand, did so. The chances of the same person being present at both locations—unless he had urgent business at both, as did you, myself and the Faceless Man—are therefore one in two million: sufficiently scant to discount. So, then—let us investigate."

Ifness brought from his pocket a tube of dull-black metal an inch in diameter, four inches long. Along the flattened top a number of knurled knobs caught the light and glittered in Ifness' hand. He made an adjustment, pointed the tube at the wall beside Etzwane, and projected a cone of light.

Etzwane had never seen a photograph so detailed. He glimpsed several views of the Corporation Plaza. Then Ifness made new adjustments, sending a thousand images flickering against the wall . . . The picture became still, to depict Pandamon Park and the folk who had come to hear the 'anonymous adventurer'.

"Look carefully at these faces," said Ifness. "Unfortunately I can't show these pictures and those from Fontenay's in juxtaposition. We must shift from one set to another."

Etzwane pointed. "There stands Garstang. Here—here—here—here—" he pointed to other faces. "I noticed these men; I wondered which might be the Anome."

"Study them. He will certainly know tricks of altering his appearance." Ifness projected pictures from various angles and vantages, and together they studied every face visible.

"Now to Fontenay's tap-room."

The tap-room was half empty; the musicians sat on the dais. Matheleno and Jurjin had not yet occupied the table near Etzwane.

Ifness chuckled. "You chose a perfect disguise," said Ifness. "You appear as yourself."

Etzwane, uncertain as to the quality of Ifness' amusement, gave a noncommittal grunt.

"We go forward in time. The young woman and Matheleno are at your table. Could Matheleno be one of the men at Pandamon Park?"

"No," said Etzwane, after reflection. "He somewhat resembles Garstang, however."

"True . . . The Aesthetes are a distinctive group—a race, in fact, in the process of differentiating."

The picture changed once more. "It is now four to five minutes before the Discriminators arrived. I would suppose the Faceless Man to be in the room. He would stand where he could watch his Benevolence." Ifness expanded the cone of light, magnifying the images, sending some to the ceiling, some to the floor. Moving the projector, he brought the faces one at a time to the wall beside Etzwane. "This one?" "No." "This one?" "No."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etzwane pointed. "The man in the far corner, leaning against the bar."

Ifness expanded the image. They looked at the face. It was a quiet face, broad of forehead, clever of eye, small of chin and mouth. The man himself was short, trim, compact. His age could not be guessed.

Ifness flicked back to Pandamon Park. Etzwane pointed out the small man with the pursed mouth and the clever, sidelong eyes. "There he is."

"Yes," said Ifness. "That is he."

"Now what?"

"For now—nothing. Go to bed, sleep. Tomorrow we will try to identify the fellow."

"What of her?" Etzwane indicated the dazed girl.

"She won't move for twelve to fourteen hours."

Chapter 12

The suns tumbled up into the mauve autumn sky like rollicking kittens: Sasetta over Ezeletta behind Zael. Ifness left the cottage slowly and cautiously, like an old gray fox going forth to hunt. Etzwane sat elbows on knees, pondering Jurjin of Xhiallinen. She lay as Ifness had left her, breathing shallowly: a creature, Etzwane thought, of absolutely entrancing appearance, beautiful enough to hypnotize a man. He studied her face: the pure pale skin, the innocent profile, the dusky eyelashes. How to reconcile this Jurjin of Xhiallinen with her dark occupation? No question but what the work must be done by someone: if unlawful acts went unpunished, Shant would lapse into anarchy, as in the old days when canton feuded with canton. Etzwane's mind was a confusion, swinging between noble rationalization and disgust. She had been commanded by the Anome; she had no choice but to obey. But why had the Anome commanded her, Jurjin of Xhiallinen, to serve as his Benevolence? Surely men like Garstang were more apt for such a service. The Anome's mind was a labyrinth with many strange chambers . . . Like the minds of all men, including his own, Etzwane told himself bitterly.

He reached forth, arranged a lock of her soft dark hair. Her eyelids flickered, and slowly opened. She turned her head and looked at Etzwane. "You are the musician."

"Yes."

She lay quiet, thinking. She noticed the light pouring through the window and made a sudden movement. "It is daytime; I can't stay here!"

"You must."

"But why?" She turned him a melting glance. "I have done you no harm."

"You would, had you the chance."

Jurjin inspected Etzwane's dour

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face. "Are you a criminal?"

"I am the 'anonymous adventurer' that Garstang went forth to kill."

"You taught sedition!"

"I urged that the Faceless Man protect Shant from the Roguskhoi. That is not sedition."

"The Roguskhoi are nothing to be feared. The Anome has told us this."

Etzwane gave an angry ejaculation. "I saw the results of the raid on Bashon. My mother was killed."

Jurjin's face became blank and distant. She murmured, "The Roguskhoi are nothing to fear."

"How would you cope with them then?"

Jurjin focused her eyes upon him. "I don't know."

"And when they swarm down upon Garwiy, what will you do? Do you wish to be ravaged? Would you bear a dozen imps that creep from your body while you sleep?"

Jurjin's face twitched. She started to wail, stopped short, and became placid. "It's a matter for the Anome." She raised to her elbow and, watching Etzwane, slowly slid her legs to the floor. Etzwane watched impassively. He asked, "Are you hungry or thirsty?"

She made no direct reply. "How long will you keep me here?"

"Until we find the Faceless Man."

"What do you want with him?"

"We will insist that he deal with the Roguskhoi."

"You intend him no harm?"

"Not I," said Etzwane, "though he has unjustly tried to kill me."

"The acts of the Anome must always be just . . . What if you can't find him?"

"Then you will remain here. Could it be otherwise?"

"Not from your point of view . . . Why do you look at me like that?"

"I wonder about you . . . How many men have you killed?"

She screamed, "One less than I would wish to!" and sprang for the door. Etzwane sat watching. Ten feet from the couch she was jerked to a halt by the cord Ifness had tied from her waist to the couch. She cried out in pain, turned and tugged frantically at the cord. Etzwane watched with detachment, feeling no pity.

Jurjin found the knot too cunning for her fingers. Slowly she returned to the couch. Etzwane had no more to say to her.

So they sat for two hours. Ifness returned as quietly as he had gone. He carried a folder which he handed to Etzwane. It contained six large photographic prints, so detailed that Etzwane could count the hairs of the Anome's sparse eyelashes. At Pandamon Park the Anome had worn a soft black rimless cap pulled low over his forehead; this, with his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down-curving little mouth and small, almost immature, nose, gave his face a foreshortened bulldog look. At Fontenay's the dark hair of a wig was drawn straight back from his forehead to swirl down and around each ear: a style popular among the upper middle classes of Garwiy, which displayed to advantage the philosopher's forehead and diminished the pinched expression of nose and mouth. Nowhere did the eyes look directly ahead; always they bore off somewhat to right or left. In both sets of photographs the Anome appeared humorless, determined, introspective and pitiless. Etzwane studied the pictures, until the face was stamped into his consciousness. He returned the picture to Ifness.

Jurjin, sitting on the couch, feigned boredom. Ifness handed her the photographs. "Who is this man?"

Jurjin's eyelids descended the merest twitch; she said in a voice too casual, "I haven't a notion."

"Have you ever seen him?"

Jurjin frowned and licked her lips. "I see many people. I couldn't begin to remember them all."

Ifness asked, "If you knew this man's identity, would you tell us?"

Jurjin laughed. "Of course not."

Ifness nodded and went to the wall cabinet. Jurjin watched him, her mouth sagging in dismay. Ifness asked over his shoulder, "Are you hungry or thirsty?"

"No."

"Do you care to visit the bathroom?"

"No."

"You had best consider carefully," said Ifness. "It now becomes necessary that I apply the hypnotic tincture. You will not move for twelve hours, which, added to the twelve hours you have already occupied the couch, might cause an embarrassment."

"Very well," said Jurjin in a cold voice. "Be so good as to release me; I would like to wash my face and hands."

"Of course." Ifness untied the cord; Jurjin marched to the door Ifness indicated. Ifness spoke to Etzwane, "stand below the bathroom window."

A moment after Etzwane arrived at his post, the window eased cautiously ajar and Jurjin looked out. At the sight of Etzwane she scowled and closed the window once more.

Jurjin returned slowly to the living room. "I do not care to be drugged," she told Ifness in a flippant voice. "Dreadful dreams afflict me."

"Indeed! What do you dream about?"

"I don't remember. Frightening things. I become very sick."

Ifness was unmoved. "I will dose you more heavily."

"No, no! You want to ask me about the pictures! I'll help you any way I know!" Her bravado

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had disappeared; her face had melted; it was tender, beseeching. Etzwane wondered how she looked with her finger on the yellow button.

Ifness asked, "Are you concealing information regarding the pictures?"

"Suppose I were? Would you expect disloyalty of me?"

"No," said Ifness. "I use the drug and remove your options. Please return to the couch."

"You will make me sick. I will fight you; I will kick and scream and bite . . ."

"Not for long," said Ifness.

The sobbing girl lay on the couch. Etzwane, panting, sat on her knees, and pressed down on her arms. Ifness applied the solution to her neck. Almost at once her writhing halted.

Ifness asked, "What do you know of the man in the photograph?"

Jurjin lay in a coma.

Etzwane said in a hushed voice, "You dosed her too heavily."

"No," said Ifness. "An overdose has no such effect."

"Then what happened to her?"

"I am mystified. First Garstang chooses an absurd method of suicide, now this."

"Do you think she knows the Faceless Man?"

"No. But she knows the man in the photographs. The Aesthetes, after all, are not strangers to each other." Ifness studied the photographs. "Of course, he might be the greengrocer . . . I neglected to mention that a picture of the 'anonymous adventurer' is posted in the Corporation Plaza, with information requested by the Discriminators."

"Hmf. So now I am proscribed."

"Until we remonstrate with the Faceless Man."

"He will be on his guard, with both Benevolences missing."

"So I would imagine. The identity of his adversaries must puzzle him greatly."

"Jurjin mentioned Palasedran spies."

"Similar theories may occur to the Faceless Man." Ifness studied the photographs. "Notice his torc. Observe the colors. What do they signify?"

"The purple-green is Garwiy. Double dark-green is a person without trade or craft: a landholder, an industrialist, a foreign-trader, an Aesthete."

Ifness nodded placidly. "No new information. The torc will certainly not respond to an echo pulse. No doubt we could walk about the Ushkadel asking questions, but I fear that we would soon be approached by the Discriminators."

Etzwane studied the photographs. "He travels around Shant, to some extent. Balloonway clerks might recognize his picture."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But would they give us information? Or would they consult the Discriminators?"

"The publishers of *Frivolity* no doubt could put a name to him, but I suppose the same objection applies."

"Precisely; questions arouse suspicion. Before informing a pair of strangers they would first notify the principal."

Etzwane pointed to the collar of the Faceless Man's jacket. "Notice this brooch: silver and amethyst in a clever design. The artificers of such objects occupy Neroi Square, to the west of Corporation Plaza. The maker would be certain to recognize his work. When we put forth the story that we had found the jewel, he might supply the name of the person to whom he had sold it."

"Excellent," said Ifness. "We will try this plan."

Neil Neroi Square occupied the heart of the Old City. The paving—three-foot tiles of murky lavender glass—was worn and irregular; the fountain at the center dated from the reign of the first Caspar Pandamon. A two-story arcade of translucent black glass surrounded the square, each column displaying the emblem of a mercantile family extinct two thousand years. The old offices had been converted into workshops for Garwiy's jewelers and metal-crafters. Each worked jealously alone, with his sons and nephews for apprentices, barely deigning to recognize the existence of his fellows. The work of each shop reflected the temperament of the shop-elder; some were known for their opals, agates, moonstones; others carved tourmaline or beryl; others created miniatures with microscopic slivers of cinnabar, lapis, turquoise, jade. Fashions and whimsicalities were only grudgingly heeded; special orders were accepted without enthusiasm. No piece carried seal or sigil; each craftsman deemed his work instantly recognizable.

From shop to shop went Ifness and Etzwane.

At Meretrice's the latest of the lineage examined the photograph. "Yes, this is one of our pieces, in the style of the Siume Dynasty. Notice the vitality of the cabochon? It comes of a secret contour, known only to us. It was lost? A pity. I do not recall the purchaser; it was crafted five years or more ago."

"I think I know the owner," said Ifness. "He came as a friend of one of my guests and I do not recall his name." He displayed a photograph of the Faceless Man.

Meretrice glanced at it. "Yes! That is Sajarano of Sershan Palace: something of a recluse. I am surprised he came to your banquet."

The palace Sershan, an intricate confection of clear and col-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ored glass, faced southeast across Garwiy. Ifness and Etzwane examined the premises from a discreet distance. They saw no activity on the loggia, nor in that area of the garden accessible to view. The Office of Archives had yielded information of no great interest. The Sershan lineage went back to middling antiquity. Prince Varo Sershan of Wild Rose had supported Viana Paizafiume; a certain Almank Sershan had raided the south coast of Caraz, returning with a vast fortune in silver corpse effigies. Sajarano was last in the direct lineage. A spouse had died twenty years before without issue; he had never taken another. He still controlled the hereditary Wild Rose estates and was a keen agriculturist. Heir presumptive was a cousin, Cambarise of Sershan.

"One possible tactic is to go to the door and ask to speak to his Excellency Sajarano," said Ifness. "Such an approach, with the virtue of utter simplicity, has much to recommend it . . . A pity," he said in musing afterthought, "that my mind always discovers hazards and contingencies . . . What if he expects us? By no means impossible. Meretrice might have become suspicious. The clerk at the Office of Archives seemed overly alert."

"I suspect he would call Discriminators the instant we appeared," said Etzwane. "Were I Sajarano I would be a worried man."

Ifness said, "In this same vein, were I Sajarano, I would not keep to my palace. I would dress inconspicuously and wander the city. I believe that we are wasting our time here. We should go where the Faceless Man is likely to go."

During late afternoon the cafes of Corporation Plaza became crowded with folk making rendezvous; at the largest of these cafes, Ifness and Etzwane seated themselves and ordered wine and biscuits.

The folk of Garwiy passed back and forth, all in greater or lesser degree imbued with the peculiar Garwiy verve and volatility.

They saw nothing of Sajarano.

The suns rolled behind the Ushkadel; shadows filled the plaza. "Time we were returning," said Ifness. "Jurjin will be rousing herself; we should be on hand."

Jurjin had already regained consciousness. Frantically, by every resource known to her, she had been trying to free herself from the cord which connected her waist to his couch. Her gown was disheveled where she had tried to slip the loop over her hips. The wood of the couch was scarred where she had sought to fray the cord. The knots, sealed by a means known only to Ifness, now engrossed her to such an ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tent that she failed to notice the arrival of Ifness and Etzwane. She looked up with the face of a trapped animal. "How long will you keep me here? I am miserable; what right have you to do such a thing to me?"

Ifness made a gesture of boredom. He loosened the cord from the couch, allowed her once more the freedom of the house.

Etzwane prepared a meal of soup, bread and dried meat, which at first she haughtily declined, then ate with good appetite.

She became more cheerful. "You two are the strangest men on Durdane. Look at you! Glum as crakes! Of course! You are ashamed of the acts you have perpetrated upon me!"

Ifness ignored her. Etzwane merely gave a sour chuckle.

"What are your plans?" she demanded. "Must I stay here forever?"

"Possibly," said Ifness. "I suspect however that circumstances may change in a day or two."

"And in the meantime? What of my friends? They are worried sick, of this I am sure. And must I wear this same gown day in and day out? You treat me like a beast."

"Patience," murmured Ifness. "Presently I will give you a drug and send you back to sleep."

"I do not want to sleep. I consider you the epitome of boorishness. And you—" she turned her attention upon Etzwane "—have you no gallantry? You sit grinning like a dogfish. Why do you not force the old man to release me?"

"So that you could report us to the Faceless Man?"

"It would be my duty. Should I be punished on this account?"

"You should not have become a Benevolence were you not willing to assume the risks."

"But I had no choice! One day I was told my destiny and from that time my life was not my own."

"You could have refused to serve. Do you enjoy taking men's heads away from them?"

"Bah," she said, "you refuse to speak on a sensible level . . . What is wrong with you?" This to Ifness, who had jerked around in his chair, to sit listening.

Etzwane listened as well, but the night was quiet. "What do you hear?" he asked.

Ifness jumped to his feet. He went to the doorway and looked out into the dark. Etzwane rose as well. Still he could hear no sound. Ifness spoke in an incomprehensible language, then listened once more.

Jurjin took advantage of the distraction to coil the cord in her hand. She lunged for Ifness, hoping to push him aside and win her freedom. Etzwane, waiting for just such a move, caught her and carried her kicking and yelling to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the couch. Ifness brought over his drug; the girl became quiet. Ifness tied the end of the rope to the couch, and this time taught Etzwane the secret of the lock. "The knot itself is a meaningless tangle of loops and turns . . ." Ifness spoke in haste. "Come here to the table. I must teach you what I know of the torcs. Quickly now!"

"What is the trouble?"

Ifness looked toward the door. He spoke in a dreary voice, "I have been recalled. I am in deep disgrace. At the least I will be expelled from the Institute."

"How do you know all this?" demanded Etzwane.

"A signal has reached me. My time on Durdane is ended."

Etzwane stared with a slack jaw. "What of the Faceless Man? What shall I do?"

"Your best. It is tragic that I must go. Attend me. I will leave you my tools, my weapons, my drugs. You must listen carefully, as I can explain only once. First: the torcs. Watch how to open one safely." He demonstrated on a torc he had brought from Gargamet Meadow. "And here is how to lock it. Watch; I will reactivate the girl's torc. The dexax fits in here; this is the detonator. The echo circuit is broken; notice this loose connection . . . Demonstrate what I have told you . . . Good . . . This is my only weapon; it shoots a needle of energy. The camera I must keep."

Etzwane listened with foreboding. He had not realized his dependence upon the detestable Ifness. "Why must you leave?"

"Because I must! Be wary of the Faceless Man and his Benevolence here. Their conduct is aberrant, in an almost imperceptible degree."

A soft sound reached Etzwane's ears. Ifness heard it as well and turned his head; otherwise he made no move.

A polite rap-tap-tap sounded at the door. Ifness walked across the room, drew the latch. In the darkness stood two shapes. The first came a little forward; Etzwane saw a man of medium stature with a pale complexion, the blackest of hair and eyebrows. He seemed to smile, a placid, grim smile; his eyes glittered in the light. The second man was a vague shape in the gloom.

Ifness spoke in a language strange to Etzwane; the black-haired man replied curtly. Ifness spoke again; the stranger as before replied with a few dry syllables.

Ifness turned back into the cottage. He took his soft black case; without a glance, word or gesture toward Etzwane, he stepped out into the night. The door closed.

A minute later Etzwane heard the soft sound. It faded into a sigh and was gone.

Etzwane poured himself a glass of wine and sat at the table. Jurjin lay in a coma on the couch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etzwane rose to his feet and explored the cottage. In the cabinet he found a wallet containing several thousand florins. In a wardrobe were garments. At need, they would fit Etzwane.

He went back to sit at the table. He thought of Frolitz, of the old days which in retrospect seemed so carefree. No more, never again. By now the 'anonymous adventurer' must be identified with Gastel Etzwane.

He decided he did not wish to remain in the cottage. He slipped into Ifness' gray cape and a gray hat. Into his pocket he tucked the energy gun and Garstang's box. After a moment's deliberation he included the drug of stupefaction which Ifness had demonstrated to him: suppose he should meet Sajarano of Sershan on this autumn evening?

Etzwane turned down the lights. The cottage was dark except for the colored loom of Garwiy through the window. Jurjin lay quiet; he could not hear her breathing. Etzwane walked softly from the cottage.

For hours he wandered the avenues of Garwiy, pausing by cafes to examine the patrons, stepping into taverns to scan the faces in the room. He dared not approach Fontenay's. At midnight he ate a meat bun and a cake of cheese at a late-hour booth.

Mist had come drifting in from the Green Ocean. It flew in wafts and tendrils among the spires, blurring the colored lights, bringing a damp scent to the air. Few folk were abroad. Wrapping himself in the cloak, Etzwane returned to the cottage.

At the gate he halted. The dark cottage seemed to wait for him. Behind, in a shed, festered Garstang's body.

Etzwane listened. Silence, darkness. He walked through the garden and paused by the door. A slight sound? He strained his ears . . . Another sound: a dry scraping. Etzwane flung open the door, sidled into the room, gun in hand. He turned up the lights. No changes were evident. The back door creaked. Etzwane ran from the front door, circled the cottage. He saw nothing. The door of the shed appeared to be ajar. Etzwane stopped short, hair bristling at the nape of his neck. Slowly he approached; jumping forward, he slammed the door and threw the latch. Then he wheeled and sprang nervously aside, in case the open door were a ploy to distract him.

No sound. Etzwane could not bring himself to investigate the shed. He went into the house. Jurjin lay in her coma. She had moved or been moved; an arm hung down to the floor.

Etzwane bolted the doors and drew the blinds. The cord binding Jurjin to the couch had been disturbed. The wooden frame of the

VIEWED TO ENSURE
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couch had been abraded, rasped. Etzwane bent over Jurjin, examined her with care. He raised her eyelid. The eyeball was rolled back. Etzwane jerked around, looked over his shoulder.

The room was empty, save for the ghosts of dead conversations.

Etzwane brewed tea and went to sit in a chair . . . Time passed. Constellations rose and fell; Etzwane dozed. He awoke cold and still to find the light of dawn seeping through the shutters.

The cottage was quiet and dismal. Etzwane prepared himself a meal and planned his day. First he must examine the shed.

Jurjin awoke. She had nothing to say. He fed her and allowed her a visit to the bathroom. She returned in a dull and despondent mood, without defiance or vivacity. She stood in the center of the room flexing her arms, which apparently were cramped. Presently she asked, "Where is the old man?"

"He is gone about his affairs."

"What may they be?"

"You'll learn in due course."

"What a strange pair you are!"

"I find you much stranger than myself," said Etzwane. "By contrast I am starkly simple."

"But still you preach sedition."

"By no means. The Roguskhoi killed my mother, and my sister as well. I say that they must be destroyed, to save all of Shant. This is not sedition. It is rationality."

"You should leave such decisions to the Anome."

"He refuses to act; hence I must force him."

"The old man's mother was likewise killed?"

"I don't believe so."

"Why is he so zealous to break the laws?"

"From sheer philanthropy."

"What? That man? He is cold as the Nimmir wind."

"Yes, in certain ways he is strange. Now I must drug you once more."

Jurjin made an airy gesture. "You need not bother. I will agree not to leave the cottage."

Etzwane gave a cynical laugh. "Please be good enough to lie upon the couch."

Jurjin approached him, smiling up into his face. "Let us be friends instead. Kiss me."

"Hmmf. At this time in the morning?"

"Would you like to?"

Etzwane dourly shook his head. "No."

"Am I so ill-favored? Old and wrinkled?"

"No. But if you could press the yellow button and take my head, you would do so. The idea does not compel my affection . . . Please make haste."

Jurjin thoughtfully went to the couch. She lay supine while Etzwane applied the drug, and soon she slept. Etzwane locked the cord to a decorative ceiling bracket.

LICENSED TO GNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He went out to inspect the shed. The door was bolted as before. He walked around. Nothing larger than a rat could have found its way in or out.

Etzwane flung wide the door; daylight revealed garden tools, household clutter, Garstang's body where he had dragged it. The face and chest were fearfully torn. Etzwane stood in the doorway looking for the creature which had done the damage. He did not dare enter, for fear the rat, if such it were, might dart forth and bite him . . . He closed and bolted the door.

Wearing the gray cloak, Etzwane sauntered glumly into Garwiy. He went directly to the Corporation Plaza. The Faceless Man might be walking the halls of Sershan Palace. He might be resting in solitude at his Wild Rose estate. He might have gone off to the far corners of Shant to punish malefactors . . . Etzwane thought otherwise. If he were the Faceless Man, he would stay in Garwiy, in contact with the Discriminators, and sooner or later he must cross the Corporation Plaza.

Etzwane stood a moment or two under the old Clockmakers' Gate. A misty chilly morning today, the suns eclipsing each other as they sidled across the sky. Etzwane went to a nearby cafe and took an inconspicuous table. He ordered broth and sat sipping.

The folk of Garwiy passed across the plaza. Near the Office of Petitions three Discriminators came together and stood talking. Etzwane watched them with interest. What if they all came at him together? He could never kill them all with the metal box: there would be insufficient time. The Faceless Man must carry another weapon, thought Etzwane: a device which would explode any torc at which it was pointed . . . Into the cafe came a man in a suit of gray and purple. His forehead was broad and pallid; the small nose, the pursed down-curving mouth were undistinguished; but the eyes, which looked off to the side, were luminous and thoughtful. He signaled to the waiter for a mug of soup, a motion peremptory but polite, in the fashion of the Aesthetes.

When the broth was served, he glanced sidewise toward Etzwane, who took care to have his own mug raised before his face; but for an unsettling instant he met the gaze of the Faceless Man.

The Faceless Man frowned slightly and looked away, as if resenting a stranger's attention.

Etzwane's nervousness made careful thinking difficult. He clenched the mug, and forcing his thoughts into a channel, sorted out his options.

He carried a gun. He could step forward, press it into the Anome's back, and utter appropriate orders. The plan had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a single overwhelming disadvantage: conspicuity. If the act were noticed, as it must be, the Discriminators would be summoned.

He could wait until the Anome departed and follow, but the Anome in his present condition of uncertainty might well notice and lead him into a trap. Etzwane told himself that he must not relinquish the initiative.

The Anome, if he recognized the 'anonymous adventurer', might be persuaded to follow Etzwane; more likely he would summon the Discriminators.

Etzwane heaved a fateful sigh. He reached into the pocket of his cape and secured an item of the equipment Ifness had left with him. He clinked a florin down on the table to pay for the broth. Scraping his chair back, he rose to his feet; then, with an exclamation, he stumbled forward to place his hand upon the Faceless Man's neck. "Sir, my apologies!" declared Etzwane. "What a disgrace! This wet napkin has fallen upon your neck!"

"No matter, no matter."

"Allow me to help you."

The Anome jerked away. "You are clumsy; what do you mean daubing my neck in such a fashion?"

"Again, my apologies! I will replace your coat if it is stained."

"No, no, no. Just be off with you, I can take care of myself."

"Very well, sir, as you wish. I must explain that this cursed chair engaged my leg and threw me forward. I'm sure the matter came as a great shock!"

"Yes, quite so. But the episode is finished; please say no more."

"Your indulgence one more moment; I must adjust my shoe. May I sit here no more than an instant?"

"As you will." The Anome turned away in his chair. Etzwane, dealing with his shoe, watched him carefully.

A moment passed. The Anome glanced about. "You are still here?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

The Anome blinked. "I am Sajarano of Sershan."

"Do you know me?"

"No."

"Look at me!"

Sajarano turned his head. His face was calm and even.

"Rise to your feet," said Etzwane. "Come with me."

Sajarano's face showed no emotion. Etzwane led him from the cafe.

"Walk faster," said Etzwane. They passed under the Pomegranate Portal into Serven Airo Way. Etzwane now clasped Sajarano's arm. Sajarano blinked. "I am tired."

"You will rest shortly. Who is the 'anonymous adventurer'?"

"He is from the east; he is at the center of a seditious cabal."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who are the others?"

"I don't know."

"Why do you not order soldiers against the Roguskhoi?"

Sajarano for ten seconds made no reply. Then he mumbled, "I don't know." His voice had begun to slur; he moved with an unsteady gait. Etzwane supported him and took him along the way as fast as possible, until near the Gate of the Seasons the Faceless Man could walk no more.

Etzwane conveyed him to a bench and waited until an empty fiacre came by, which he halted. "My friend has had a drop too much; we must take him home before his wife finds out."

"It happens to the best of us. Into the back with him. Can you manage?"

"Very well. Drive out the Avenue of the Thasarene Directors."

Chapter 14

Etzwane undressed the Faceless Man to his undergarments and laid him on the couch across from Jurjin. The Faceless Man was not physically impressive. From the garments Etzwane removed an activating box like that carried by Garstang, an energy-gun of complex design, a small case which Etzwane presumed to be a radio transceiver, a metal tube of unknown function; Etzwane thought it might be the all-torc destroyer he had hypothesized.

He brought forth Ifness' tools and ranged them carefully in a row. With intense concentration he removed Sajarano's torc as he had seen Ifness do. To his intense puzzlement the torc contained a full complement of dexax. The echo circuits were apparently operative. Etzwane stared in amazement. What could be the reason for this? A terrible presentiment struck him; had he captured the wrong man?

If not, why should the Faceless Man wear an armed torc?

The solution rose into his mind: a reason so simple and full of relief that he laughed outright. Like everyone else, Sajarano of Sershan had assumed his torc at puberty. When, through circumstances shrouded and secret, he had become the Anome, he knew no method to alter the situation, except to alter the color coding, as protection against his Benevolences.

Etzwane slipped off his own torc. He restored the explosive to its slot, and reconnected the circuits. He placed this around Sajarano's neck and locked it in place.

An unpleasant task awaited him. He went out to the shed and threw open the door. The rat, if such it were, scuttled under a pile of sacks. It had, so Etzwane noted, been feeding upon Garstang's body. In revulsion Etzwane brought forth Ifness' gun and sent a spear of pale fire at the sacks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They disappeared in a gust of vile-smelling smoke, and with them the creature who had taken refuge below.

Etzwane picked up a spade and, digging a shallow grave, buried Garstang.

When he returned into the house, all was as before. He bathed, changed his clothes, then sat and waited, his mood a strange mixture of exultation and loneliness.

Jurjin awoke first. She seemed tired; her face sagged and her skin showed an unhealthy color. Sitting up on the couch, she looked at Etzwane with undisguised bitterness.

"How long will you keep me here?"

"Not long now."

She peered across the room. "Who is that man?"

"Do you know him?"

Jurjin shrugged, a brave attempt at debonair defiance.

"His name is Sajarano of Sershan," said Etzwane. "He is the Faceless Man."

"Why is he here?"

"You shall see. . . . Are you hungry?"

"No."

Etzwane thought a moment or two. Then he unlocked the cord which bound her. She stood up, free of her bonds. Etzwane faced her.

"Do not leave this house. If you do, I will take your head. The Anome is here and cannot help you. You must now obey me as formerly you did the Anome. You must not obey him. Do you understand?"

"I understand well enough . . . But I am confused. Who are you?"

"I am Gastel Etzwane, a musician. So I was, so I hope to be again."

Hours passed. Jurjin wandered about the house, watching Etzwane with wonder, defiance and female spite.

Toward evening Sajarano recovered his senses. He became alert very quickly and sat up on the couch. For half a minute he appraised Etzwane and Jurjin. He spoke in the coldest of voices. "Suppose you explain why you have brought me here."

"Because the Roguskhoi must be attacked; because you refused to act."

"This is solemn and deliberate policy," said Sajarano. "I am a man of peace; I refuse to bring the horrors of war to Shant."

"Worry no longer; the Roguskhoi have done the job for you."

Etzwane pointed to Sajarano's old torc. "You are wearing an active torc. It carries its full complement of dexax. I carry the detonator. You now must answer to me, and so must your Benevolence as well."

Jurjin, standing across the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

room, went to sit on the couch. "I obey the Anome."

Sajarano asked, "What of Garstang?"

"Garstang is dead."

Sajarano's hand went up to his new torc, after the manner of the folk of Shant. "What do you propose to do?"

"The Roguskhoi must be destroyed."

Sajarano spoke in a quiet voice, "You do not know what you are saying. In Shant we enjoy peace and good fortune; we must maintain it. Why risk chaos and militarism for the sake of a few barbarians?"

"Peace and good fortune are not the natural bounties of nature," said Etzwane. "If you believe this, I will send you to Caraz, where you can learn for yourself."

"You cannot wish to bring turmoil to Shant," cried Sajarano, in a suddenly brassy voice.

"I wish to repel a clear and present danger. Will you obey my orders? If you refuse, I will kill you this moment."

Sajarano sank back in his chair. He seemed apathetic, and watched Etzwane sidelong, in which pose his small nose and mouth seemed curiously immature. "I will obey."

Jurjin was restless; her face twitched and jerked in grimaces which under other circumstances might have been amusing and endearing. She rose to her feet, went to the table.

Etzwane asked, "The Discriminators are now searching for the 'anonymous adventurer'?"

"Yes."

"They have orders to kill him?"

"If necessary."

Etzwane gave him the transceiver. "How do you use this?"

Jurjin came forward as if interested. From behind her back flashed a glass knife. Etzwane, watching from the corner of his eye, knocked her sprawling back on the couch. Sajarano struggled up, kicked Etzwane, grappled him around the neck. Etzwane lunged ahead. The line around Sajarano's neck snapped taut, to snatch him flailing back to the couch.

"Your promises seem to mean little," Etzwane observed. "I was hoping that I might trust you both."

"Why *should* we *not* fight for what we believe?" demanded Jurjin.

"I promised to obey you," said Sajarano. "I said nothing about not trying to kill you when an opportunity offered."

Etzwane grinned, a dour, sardonic grin. "In that case I order you not to try to kill or injure me in any way. Will you obey?"

Sajarano sighed in vast unease. "Yes . . . What else can I say?"

Etzwane looked at Jurjin. "What about you?"

"I promise nothing," she declared haughtily.

Etzwane seized her arm and pulled her toward the door.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where are you going?" she cried. "What are you doing?"

"I am taking you to the back yard to kill you," said Etzwane.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "Please do not . . . I promise to obey you!"

"And will you seek to harm me?"

"No!"

Etzwane released her; she ran back to the couch.

Etzwane returned to Sajarano. "Explain the function of this transceiver."

"I press the white button," said Sajarano in a calm voice. "It transmits to the relays I designate on this dial. I speak; the orders are broadcast from the relay station."

"Call the Discriminators, order them no longer to molest the 'anonymous adventurer'. State that Gastel Etzwane must be given respectful and instant obedience, no less than you would expect for yourself.

Sajarano did so, in a flat voice. He looked up at Etzwane. "What else do you require of me?"

Etzwane, standing across the room, looked from one face to the other, from Jurjin of Xhiallinen to the Faceless Man. Both, he knew, would play him false as soon as an opportunity offered. Dead, they would be no threat to him. Jurjin's eyes widened, as if she read his thoughts . . . It might be for the best. Still, if he killed the Faceless Man, who would govern Shant? Who would organize the military apparatus necessary to his goals? The Faceless Man must live. In which case he could see no reason to kill Jurjin of Xhiallinen.

The two watched him intently, trying to divine the direction of his thoughts. Etzwane said in a fateful voice, "You are free to go. Do not leave the Ushkadel."

He untied the cord from Sajarano's waist. "A warning: if I am killed, if I disappear, you'll both lose your heads."

With neither ceremony nor overmuch dignity the two departed the cottage. At the gate Jurjin looked over her shoulder; in the dark Etzwane could see only the glimmer of her face. Uneasily he sensed that Ifness would have handled the situation differently, that at some essential juncture his affairs had gone wrong.

He loaded Ifness' black case with such weapons and instruments as he did not dare leave behind and then departed the cottage.

At the Old Pagane he dined on the best the house offered, amused by his twinges of instinctive parsimony. Money had become the least of his concerns.

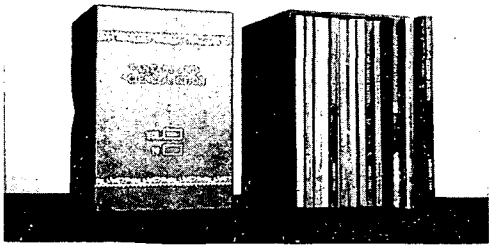
He sauntered along the riverbank to Fontenay's, where he found Frolitz and the troupe drinking beer. Frolitz hailed Etzwane in angry reproof mixed with relief. "What have you been up to? We've been persecuted by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Discriminators! They say you kidnaped an Aesthete girl."

"All nonsense," said Etzwane. "A ridiculous mistake. I'd rather not talk about it."

"Clearly you don't care to enlighten us," said Frolitz. "Well, no matter. To work. I have a sore lip; tonight I'll use the khitan; Etzwane will play woodhorn. We'll start with that Morningshore trifle *Birds in the Surf* . . ."



Handsome. Sturdy

VOLUME FILES

for Your Copies of

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Each Volume File will keep 12 copies of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION clean, orderly, and readily accessible. Sturdily built the files are covered with a rich black and red washable leatherette, and the lettering is in 16-carat gold leaf.

Reasonably priced at $3.50 each, 3 for $10.00 or 6 for $19.00, they are shipped fully postpaid on a money back basis if not satisfactory. Order direct from:

JESSE JONES BOX CORPORATION

Dept. F&SF P.O. Box 5120 Philadelphia, Pa., 19141

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stephen Barr returns with a succinct parable about the day when Science goes about as far as it can go . . .

THE ART MACHINE

by Stephen Barr

THE TIME AT LAST CAME WHEN utopia reigned throughout the world. Not visionary, like Sir Thomas More's, nor down-to-earth, like Mr. Wells's, but a state of peace, plenty and freedom. All the sciences had gone as far as they might and had coalesced into one science. Chemistry and physics had been swallowed up by mathematics, and mathematics had been taken over by logical philosophy.

On the great day that all this had become universally evident, a meeting was called of all the philosophers, in the Hall of United Science by the Chief Philosopher.

Friends and Fellow Workers (he said):

As we all know, Science has finally solved everything—that is to say, everything that the human mind can comprehend, everything which is within the scope of knowledge, speculation and invention. Everything except for one category of human activity. I refer to the Arts.

But why should this one subject be beyond our powers of analysis? Why is it not to be comprehended by the same scientific description and synthesis that everything else is? What I am about to say will not be news to all of you, but for many it will be. My friends, the problem has been solved!

A number of us have been working on this problem for many years; specialists in its many aspects working on their own or in small groups. First the task has been to analyze the various elements that make up Art, and then to synthesize—to show how these elements can be produced by Science. There has been, for ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ample, a group that has concerned itself with Painting, but this group has itself been subdivided into many smaller groups.

One of these has worked out the principles that govern linear form—the complex equations underlying what is or is not significant in the movement of a pencil, a pen or a brush. Then the question of color—its relation and modulation, and the allied but profoundly different one of texture. Each one of these factors has had its own particular team of philosophical analysts. The relatedness of light and dark, composition—many, many others—were the subjects of the intensest exploration. And then Music; the interplay of harmonic change and contrapuntal shape in melodic development, the function of accident and the unconscious. Wave-form analysis was useful here—and much of music finds close analogy in the Plastic Arts and in the involvement of word-sounds in the expression of a literary form or idea.

Some of this work was done by our computers, our supercomputers and our ultracomputers, which made, for example, exhaustive statistical research into the various components.

Then again, much was done by synthetical experiment, much by a kind of submicroscopic recording and investigation of actual artists at work. Also writers and composers whose thought processes were laid bare by the polygraph-computer.

All these multifarious endeavors having been completed, it remains only to put them together, and the privilege of seeing this done has been reserved for this moment, and for you all to witness.

I myself have not seen, nor could I guess in advance, the nature of the resultant whole. It is in the form of a Machine—a computer-synthesizer if you will—but of such complexity and dimensions as to merit a nobler word. And the Machine itself is in the form of a diagram, for to build it is unnecessary, since what works in theory, provided that theory be correct, will also work in practice.

The diagram of which I speak is at present in many hundreds of component parts, and each of these is the product of a team which has dealt with and solved that particular element of Art. It is impossible to envisage the whole until it is assembled, and I, no more than you, can imagine what it will be like, except only that it will be a Machine that can produce Art!

So, my Friends and Fellow Workers, I shall ask you all to get up from your seats and go to the back of the hall, for the diagram when assembled on the wall behind me will be of such a size that it must be seen from a distance. I thank you.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then, as many assistants began to attach the hundreds of sectional diagrams in their correct relative places on the huge wall that faced the auditorium, the eager and expectant assembly did as they were told and went to the farthest end.

And at a signal from the Chief Philosopher they turned about and saw, stretching to the lofty roof, the vast and awful figure of a Man.

FILMS, *from p. 49*

ing the Star Spangled Banner dressed as the Statue of Liberty, and Michael Murphy is irresistable as a steely-eyed hip detective from San Francisco with suitcases full of turtle neck sweaters and blue contact lenses. The whole madhouse was directed by Robert Altman, who gave us M*A*S*H, and I highly recommend it.

A note on a revival . . . Walt Disney's *Fantasia,* a film certainly decades ahead of its time, seems to have finally found its audience in today's younger generation. A recent revival proved so popular that it is making the rounds again. It is one of the all time great films of the fantastic (I've chalked up about 25 viewings myself) whether your taste runs to witch's sabbaths, elves, dinosaurs, or unicorns in decorator colors. The "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence holds up best (how did they ever get away with some of that material twenty years ago?), but it's all still palatable, even that mouse confronting those implacable brooms, and the pietistic Ave Maria finale, which does some wonderful things with light.

Things-to-come Dept. . . . *Stranger in a Strange Land* is definitely on Warners' 1971 production list. . . . Films currently in the making include several with such names as *Creatures the World Forgot, The House that Dripped Blood,* and *To Love a Vampire.* What we have to look forward to!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE

EUCLID'S FIFTH

by Isaac Asimov

SOME OF MY ARTICLES STIR UP MORE reader comment than others, and one of the most effective in this respect was THE ISAAC WINNERS (F & SF, July 1963) in which I listed those who, in my opinion, were scientists of the first magnitude and concluded by working up a personal list of the ten greatest scientists of all time.

Naturally, I received letters arguing for the omission of one or more of my ten best in favor of one or more others, and I still get them, even now, seven and a half years after the article was written.

Usually, I reply by explaining that estimates as to the ten greatest scientists (always excepting the case of Isaac Newton, concerning whom there can be no reasonable disagreement) are largely a subjective matter and cannot really be argued out.

Recently, I received a letter from a reader who argued that Archimedes, one of my ten, ought to be replaced by Euclid, who was not one of my ten. I replied in my usual placating manner, but then went on to say that Euclid was "merely a systematizer" while Archimedes had made very important advances in physics and mathematics.

But later my conscience grew active. I still adhered to my own opinion of Archimedes taking pride of place over Euclid, but the phrase "merely a systematizer" bothered me. There is nothing necessarily "mere" about being a systematizer.*

For three centuries before Euclid (who flourished about 300 B.C.) Greek geometers had labored at proving one geometric theorem or another, and a great many had been worked out.

What Euclid did was to make a system out of it all. He began with

*Sometimes there is. In all my non-fiction writings I am "merely" a systematizer. —Just in case you think I'm never modest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certain definitions and assumptions and then used them to prove a few theorems. Using those definitions and assumptions plus the few theorems he had already proved, he proved a few additional theorems and so on, and so on.

He was the first, as far as we know, to build an elaborate mathematical system based on the explicit attitude that it was useless to try to prove *everything*; that it was essential to make a beginning with some things that could not be proved but that could be accepted without proof because they satisfied intuition. Such intuitive assumptions, without proof, are called "axioms."

This was in itself a great intellectual advance, but Euclid did something more. He picked *good* axioms.

To see what this means, consider that you would want your list of axioms to be complete; that is, they should suffice to prove all the theorems that are useful in the particular field of knowledge being studied. On the other hand, they shouldn't be redundant. You don't want to be able to prove all those theorems even after you have omitted one or more of your axioms from the list; or to be able to prove one or more of your axioms by the use of the remaining axioms. Finally, your axioms must be consistent. That is, you do not want to use some axioms to prove that something is so and then use other axioms to prove the same thing to be *not* so.

For two thousand years, Euclid's axiomatic system stood the test. No one ever found it necessary to add another axiom, and no one was ever able to eliminate one or to change it substantially—which is a pretty good testimony to Euclid's judgment.

By the end of the 19th Century, however, when notions of mathematical rigor had hardened, it was realized that there were many tacit assumptions in the Euclidean system; that is assumptions that Euclid made without specifically saying that he had made them, and that all his readers also made, apparently without specifically saying so to themselves.

For instance, among his early theorems are several that demonstrate two triangles to be congruent (equal in both shape and size) by a course of proof that asks people to imagine that one triangle is moved in space so that it is superimposed on the other. That, however, presupposes that a geometrical figure doesn't change in shape and size when it moves. Of course it doesn't, you say. Well, you assume it doesn't and I assume it doesn't and Euclid assumed it doesn't—but Euclid never said he assumed it.

Again, Euclid assumed that a straight line could extend infinitely in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both directions—but never said he was making that assumption.

Furthermore, he never considered such important basic properties as the *order of points in a line, and some of his basic definitions* were inadequate—

But never mind. In the last century, Euclidean geometry has been placed on a basis of the utmost rigor, and while that meant the system of axioms and definitions was altered, Euclid's geometry remained the same. It just meant that Euclid's axioms and definitions, *plus* his unexpressed assumptions, were adequate to the job.

Let's consider Euclid's axioms now. There were ten of them and he divided them into two groups of five. One group of five were called "common notions" because they were common to all sciences:

1 - Things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to one another.

2 - If equals are added to equals, the sums are equal.

3 - If equals are subtracted from equals, the remainders are equal.

4 - Things which coincide with one another are equal to one another.

5 - The whole is greater than the part.

These "common notions" seem so common, indeed so obvious, so immediately acceptable by intuition, so incapable of contradiction, that they seem to represent absolute truth. They seem something a person could seize upon as soon as he had evolved the light of reason. Without ever sensing the Universe in any way, but living only in the luminous darkness of his own mind, he would see that things equal to the same thing are equal to one another and all the rest.

He might then, using Euclid's axioms, work out all the theorems of geometry and, therefore, the basic properties of the Universe from first principles, without having observed anything.

The Greeks were so fascinated with this notion that all mathematical knowledge comes from within that they lost one important urge that might have led to the development of experimental science. There were experimenters among the Greeks, notably Ctesibius and Hero, but their work was looked upon by the Greek scholars as a kind of artisanship rather than as science.

In one of Plato's dialogues, Socrates asks a slave certain questions about a geometric diagram and has him answer and prove a theorem in doing so. This was Socrates' method of showing that even an utterly uneducated man could draw truth from out of himself. Nevertheless, it took an extremely sophisticated man, Socrates, to ask the questions, and the slave was by no means uneducated, for merely by having been alive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and perceptive for years, he had learned to make many assumptions by observation and example, without either himself or (apparently) Socrates being completely aware of it.

Still as late as 1800, influential philosophers such as Immanuel Kant held that Euclid's axioms represented absolute truth.

But do they? Would anyone question the statement that "the whole is greater than the part"? Since 10 can be broken up into 6 + 4, are we not completely right in assuming that 10 is greater than either 6 or 4? If an astronaut can get into a space capsule, would we not be right in assuming that the volume of the capsule is greater than the volume of the astronaut? How could we doubt the general truth of the axiom?

Well, any list of consecutive numbers can be divided into odd numbers and even numbers so that we might conclude that in any such list of consecutive numbers, the total of all numbers present must be greater than the total of even numbers. And yet if we consider an *infinite* list of consecutive numbers, it turns out that the total number of all numbers is equal to the total number of all the even numbers. In what is called "transfinite mathematics" the particular axiom about the whole being greater than the part simply does not apply.

Again, suppose that two automobiles travel between points A and B by identical routes. The two routes coincide. Are they equal? Not necessarily. The first automobile travelled from A to B, while the second traveled from B to A. In other words, two lines might coincide and yet be unequal since the direction of one might be different from the direction of the other.

Is this just fancy talk? Can a line be said to have direction? Yes, indeed. A line with direction is a "vector," and in "vector mathematics" the rules aren't quite the same as in ordinary mathematics, and things can coincide without being equal.

In short, then, axioms are *not* examples of absolute truth, and it is very likely that there is no such thing as absolute truth at all. The axioms of Euclid are axioms not because they appear as absolute truth out of some inner enlightenment, but only because they seem to be true in the context of the real world.

And that is why the geometric theorems derived from Euclid's axioms seem to correspond with what we call reality. They *started* with what we call reality.

It is possible to start with any set of axioms, provided they are not self-contradictory, and work up a system of theorems consistent with those axioms and with each other, even though they are *not* consistent with what we think of as the real world. This does not make the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"arbitrary mathematics" less "true" than the one starting from Euclid's axioms, only less useful, perhaps. Indeed, an "arbitrary mathematics" may be *more* useful than ordinary "common-sense" mathematics in special regions such as those of transfinites or of vectors.

Even so, we must not confuse "useful" and "true." Even if an axiomatic system is so bizarre as to be useful in no conceivable practical sense, we can nevertheless say nothing about its "truth." If it is self-consistent, that is all we have a right to demand of any system of thought. "Truth" and "reality" are theological words, not scientific ones.

But back to Euclid's axioms. So far I have only listed the five "common notions." There were also five more axioms on the list that were specifically applicable to geometry, and these were later called "postulates." The first of these postulates was:

1 - It is possible to draw a straight line from any point to any other point.

This seems eminently acceptable, but are you sure? Can you prove that you can draw a line from the Earth to the Sun? *If* you could somehow stand on the Sun safely and hold the Earth motionless in its orbit, and somehow stretch a string from the Earth to the Sun and pull it absolutely taut, that string would represent a straight line from Earth to Sun. You're sure that this is a reasonable "thought experiment," and I'm sure it is, too, but we only *assume* that matters can be so. We can't ever demonstrate them, or prove them mathematically.

And, incidentally, what is a straight line? I have just made the assumption that if a string is pulled absolutely taut, it has a shape we would recognize as what we call a straight line. But what is that shape? We simply can't do better than say, "A straight line is something very, very thin and very, very straight" or to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, "A straight line is a straight line is a straight line—"

Euclid defines a straight line as "a line which lies evenly with the points on itself," but I would hate to have to try to describe what he means by that statement to a student beginning the study of geometry.

Another definition says that: A straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

But if a string is pulled absolutely taut, it cannot go from the point at one end to the point at the other in any shorter distance, so that to say that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points is the same as saying that it has the shape of an absolutely taut string, and we can still say, "And what shape is that?"

In modern geometry, straight lines are not defined at all. What is said, in essence, is this: Let us call something a line which has the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

following properties in connection with other undefined terms like "point," "plane," "between," "continuous," and so on. Then the properties are listed.

Be that as it may, here are the remaining postulates of Euclid:

2 - A finite straight line can be extended continuously in a straight line.

3 - A circle can be described with any point as center and any distance as radius.

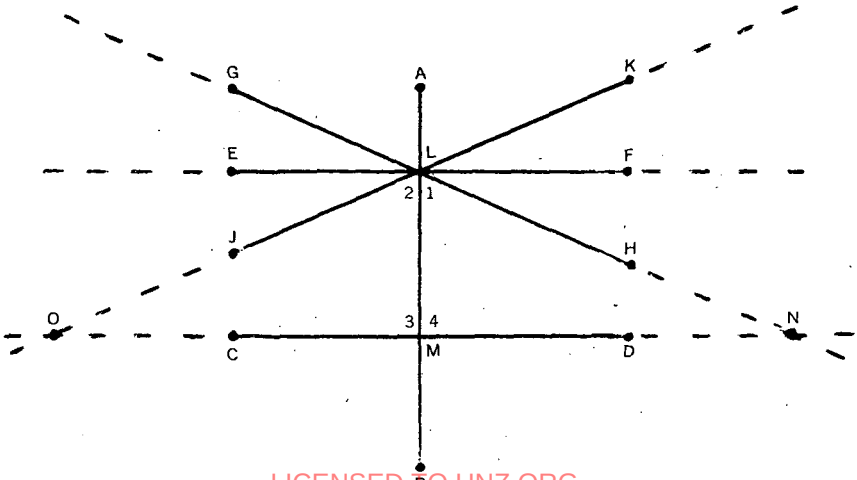
4 - All right angles are equal.

5 - If a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles.

I trust you notice something at once. Of all the ten axioms of Euclid, only one—the fifth postulate—is a long jawbreaker of a sentence; and only one—the fifth postulate—doesn't make instant sense.

Take any intelligent person who has studied arithmetic and who has heard of straight lines and circles and give him the ten axioms one by one and let him think a moment and he will say, "Of course!" to each of the first nine. Then recite the fifth postulate and he will surely say, "What?"

And it will take a long time before he understands what's going on. In fact, I wouldn't undertake to explain it myself without a diagram like this one:



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Consider two of the solid lines in the diagram: the one that runs from point C to point D through point M (call it line CD after the end points) and the one that runs through points G, L, and H (line GH). A third line, which runs through points A, L, M and B (line AB) crosses both GH and CD, making angles with both.

If line CD is supposed to be perfectly horizontal, and line AB is supposed to be perfectly vertical, then the four angles made in the crossing of the two lines (angles CMB, BMD, DML, and LMC) are right angles and are all equal (by postulate 4). In particular, angles DML and LMC, which I have numbered in the diagram as 3 and 4, are equal, and are both right angles.

(I haven't bothered to define "perfectly horizontal" or "perfectly vertical" or "crosses" or to explain why the crossing of a perfectly horizontal line with a perfectly vertical line produces four right angles, but I am making no pretense of being completely rigorous. This sort of thing *can* be made rigorous, but only at the expense of a lot more talk than I am prepared to give.)

Now consider line GH. It is *not* perfectly horizontal. That means the angles it produces at its intersection (I haven't defined "intersection") with line AB are not right angles and are not all equal. It can be shown that angles ALH and GLB are equal and that angles HLB and GLA are equal but that either of the first pair is not equal to either of the second pair. In particular, angle GLB (labelled 2) is not equal to angle HLB (labelled 1).

Suppose we draw line EF, passing through L, and that line EF is (like line CD) perfectly horizontal. In that case it makes four equal right angles at its intersection with line AB. In particular, angles FLB and ELB are right angles. But angle HLB is contained within angle FLB (what does "is contained within" mean?) with room to spare. Since angle HLB is only part of FLB and the latter is a right angle, then angle HLB (angle 1) is less than a right angle, by the fifth "common notion."

In the same way, by comparing angle ELB, known to be a right angle, with angle GLB (angle 2), we can show that angle 2 is greater than a right angle.

The "interior angles" of the diagram are those on the side of line GH that faces line CD, and those on the side of line CD that faces line GH. In other words, they are angles 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The fifth postulate talks about "the interior angles on the same side"; that is 1 and 4 on one side and 2 and 3 on the other. Since we know that 3 and 4 are right angles, that 1 is less than a right angle, and that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2 is more than a right angle, we can say that the interior angles on one side, 1 and 4, have a sum less than two right angles, while the interior angles on the other have a sum greater than two right angles.

The fifth postulate now states that if the lines EH and CD are extended, they will intersect on the side where the interior angles with a sum less than two right angles are located. And, indeed, if you look at the diagram you will see that if lines GH and CD are extended on both sides (dotted lines), they will intersect at point N on the side of interior angles 1 and 4. On the other side, they just move farther and farther apart and clearly will never intersect.

On the other hand, if you draw line JK through L, you would reverse the situation. Angle 2 would be less than a right angle, and angle 1 would be greater than a right angle (where angle 2 is now angle JLB and angle 1 is now angle KLB). In that case interior angles 2 and 3 would have a sum less than two right angles, and interior angles 1 and 4 would have a sum greater than two right angles. If lines JK and CD were extended (dotted lines) they would intersect at point O on the side of interior angles 2 and 3. On the other side they would merely diverge further and further.

Now that I've explained the fifth postulate at great length (and even then only at the cost of being very un-rigorous) you might be willing to say, "Oh, yes, of course! Certainly! It's obvious!"

Maybe, but if something is obvious, it shouldn't require hundreds of words of explanation. I didn't have to belabor any of the other nine axioms, did I?

Then again, having *explained* the fifth postulate, have I *proved* it? No, I have only interpreted the meaning of the words and then pointed to the diagram and said, "And indeed, if you look at the diagram, you will see—"

But that's only one diagram. And it deals with a perfectly vertical line crossing two lines of which one is perfectly horizontal. And what if none of the lines are either vertical or horizontal and that none of the interior angles are right angles. The fifth postulate applies to *any* line crossing any two lines and I certainly haven't proved that.

I can draw a million diagrams of different types and show that in each specific case the postulate holds, but that is not enough. I must show that it holds in every conceivable case and this can't be done by diagrams. A diagram can only make the proof clear; the proof itself must be derived by permissible logic from more basic premises already proved, or assumed. This I have not done.

Now let's consider the fifth postulate from the standpoint of moving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lines. Suppose line GH is swivelled about L as a pivot in such a way that it comes closer and closer to coinciding with line EF. (Does a straight line remain a straight line while it swivels in this fashion? We can only *assume* it does.) As line GH swivels toward line EF, the point of intersection with line CD (point N) moves farther and farther to the right.

If you started with line JK and swivelled it so that it would eventually coincide with line EF, the intersection point O would move off farther and farther to the left. If you consider the diagram and make a few markings on it (if you have to) you will see this for yourself.

But consider line EF itself. When GH has finally swivelled so as to coincide with line EF, we might say that intersection point N has moved off an infinite distance to the right (whatever we mean by "infinite distance"), and when line JK coincides with line EF, the intersection point O has moved off an infinite distance to the left. Therefore, we can say that line EF and line CD intersect at *two* points, one an infinite distance to the right and one an infinite distance to the left.

Or let us look at it another way. Line EF, being perfectly horizontal, interesects line AB to make four equal right angles. In that case, angles 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all right angles and *all* equal. Angles 1 and 4 have a sum equal to two right angles, and so do angles 2 and 3.

But the fifth postulate says the intersection comes on the side where the two interior angles have a sum *less* than two right angles. In the case of lines EF and CD crossed by line AB, neither set of interior angles has a sum less than two right angles and there can be an intersection on neither side.

We have now, by two sets of arguments, demonstrated, first, that lines EF and CD intersect at two points, each located an infinite distance away, and second, that lines FF and CD do not intersect at all. Have we found a contradiction and thus shown that there is something wrong with Euclid's set of axioms?

To avoid a contradiction, we can say that having an intersection at an infinite distance is equivalent to saying there is no intersection. They are different ways of saying the same thing. To agree that "saying a" is equal to "saying b" in this case is consistent with all the rest of geometry, so we can get away with it.

Let us now say that two lines, such as EF and CD, which do not intersect with each other when extended any *finite* distance, however great, are "parallel."

Clearly, there is only one line passing through L that can be parallel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to line CD and that is line EF. Any line through L that does not coincide with line EF is (however slightly) either of the type of line GH or of line JK, with an interior angle on one side or the other that is less than a right angle. This argument is sleight of hand, and not rigorous, but it allows us to see the point and say: Given a straight line, and a point outside that line, it is possible to draw one and only one straight line through that point parallel to the given line.

This statement is entirely equivalent to Euclid's fifth postulate. If Euclid's fifth postulate is removed and this statement put in its place, the entire structure of Euclidean geometry remains standing without as much as a quiver.

The version of the postulate that refers to parallel lines *sounds* clearer and easier to understand than the way Euclid puts it, because even the beginning student has some notion of what parallel lines look like, whereas he may not have the foggiest idea of what interior angles are. That is why it is in this "parallel" form that you usually see the postulate in elementary geometry books.

Actually, though, it isn't really simpler and clearer in this form, for as soon as you try to explain what you mean by "parallel," you're going to run into the matter of interior angles. Or, if you try to avoid that, you'll run into the problem of talking about lines of infinite length, of intersections at an infinite distance being equivalent to no intersection, and that's even worse.

But look, just because I didn't prove the fifth postulate doesn't mean it can't be proven. Perhaps by some line of argument, exceedingly lengthy, subtle and ingenious, it is possible to prove the fifth postulate by use of the other four postulates and the five common notions (or by use of some additional axiom not included in the list which, however, is much simpler and "obvious" than the fifth postulate is).

Alas, no. For two thousand years mathematicians have now and then tried to prove the fifth postulate from the other axioms simply because that cursed fifth postulate was so long and so un-obvious that it didn't seem possible that it could be an axiom. Well, they always failed and it seems certain they *must* fail. The fifth postulate is just not contained in the other axioms or in any list of axioms useful in geometry and simpler than itself.

It can be argued, in fact, that the fifth postulate is Euclid's greatest achievement. By some remarkable leap of insight, he realized that given the nine brief and clearly "obvious" axioms, he could not prove the fifth postulate and that he could not do without it either, and that, therefore,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

long and complicated though the fifth postulate was, *he had to include it among his assumptions.*

So for two thousand years the fifth postulate stood there; long, ungainly, puzzling. It was like a flaw in perfection, a standing reproach to a line of argument otherwise infinitely stately. It bothered the very devil out of mathematicians.

And then, in 1733, an Italian priest, Girolamo Saccheri, got the most brilliant notion concerning the fifth postulate that anyone had had since the time of Euclid, but wasn't brilliant enough himself to handle it—

Let's go into that next month.

Have you had trouble finding F&SF on your newsstand?

From time to time, readers report that they have not been able to find F&SF on newsstands in their area. We appreciate this information; we do our best to increase coverage; and we will continue these efforts.

However, we are finding it increasingly difficult to get adequate newsstand distribution. The system is wasteful and inefficient, and it has unfortunately continued to deteriorate in recent years.

If you enjoy F&SF, may we urge you to subscribe. You'll be sure of getting your copy regularly and in advance of newsstand publication. You will also save money. Use the coupon on page 32 or the card insert in the center of the magazine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B. (for Beverly) L. Keller is a former journalist, now a free-lance writer whose work has appeared in Cosmopolitan *and* The Atlantic. *Her first story for F&SF is very funny and filled with lots of perfectly lovely twists. For one, it covers a comfortable and classic fantasy theme with a contemporary overlay that is, to our over-30 mind, so bizarre, so . . . well, meet the fabulous Booba Lawson.*

BIRDLIME

by B. L. Keller

Booba Lawson—the Fabulous Booba, as she was known to herself—slid loving hands down her sides, rapt gaze ensnared in her mirror. When she bounced on her toes, her new-ripe breasts jiggled merrily under her barely transparent shirt.

With some regret she pulled her poncho over her head, but her disappointment at the eclipse of that enchanting jiggle was swept away in her fascination with the play of light upon the planes of her face as she turned her head this way and that.

Her eyes, twin pools of Maybelline overhung by a sedge of flaxen bangs, narrowed, for she thought she detected a zit erupting on her chin. Leaning forward, soft glossed lips pouting, she became so engrossed in her repertoire of pouts that she had to write herself a tardy note in her mother's hand when she got to school.

Intoxicated by the flowing skill of her forgery, she wrote excuses for three friends who had spent the previous day stoned at the airport, grooving on jet shrieks. She emerged from the girls' rest room with a sycophantic retinue and $4.50 cash.

She moved in triumph through the school day, her sheerest nylon bikini underpanties caught in the cleft between her gulteal globes and peeping from under her wisp of a skirt each time she bent over to pick up any one of the innumerable small objects she found or dropped that day, causing the spillage of more seed than all the agri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cultural economists in Washington.

Booba had never even heard of Emile Zola.

In the evening she went to a coffee house whose promoters had obtained a license upon their promise to keep the young off alcohol and the streets. A cup of coffee cost more there than a joint, but it was the warmth of togetherness which mattered.

It was not cool for a girl to show up alone. For lack of anybody better, Booba went with her classmate Feebie Frean. Feebie had had her day. The previous year she had been the first eighth-grader to have made a plaster cast of the erectile member of one of the up-and-coming rock stars on the West Coast. But as some of Feebie's peers went on to bigger and better things, even British groups, her trophy became a bore. However, she had other characteristics that made her a desirable companion when nobody better was available—rich parents, an enormous allowance, and a willingness to buy friendship.

The Merdé, a group which had just missed being asked to play with the Stones at that fabulous free Tijuana concert which led to the U. S. occupation of Baja California and the settlement in which we retained Ensenada as a naval base and outlet for factory seconds, was playing. Feebie danced alone until a wispy but bright-eyed youth joined her; they bumped and ground ecstatically, pelvis to pelvis, heads far apart.

Booba, however, was feeling regal. Somebody had told her that afternoon that she dressed like an Hungarian whore, and the compliment had gone to her brain. She stared down the boys who approached her, enjoying their confusion.

An old man was watching her. Dirty old man, she thought, giggling. He was thirty anyway. Still, there was something fascinating about him. In the first place, he looked like Leonard Nimoy, except for the ears. Tall, pale, sinister, intense, but cool. There was a menace in his gaze, deeper, darker and scarier than what Booba, for want of a better cliché, thought of as naked lust. She felt a throb in her pelvis. No need to question, no need to reason—Booba trusted her finer instincts.

As if monitering her throbs, he made his way to her table.

"Another coffee?"

He looked even older close up. Maybe thirty-two. Would that make him a filthy old man? Booba smiled enchantingly. Feebie had spent her last six dollars just for admission and two Basque mochas, and Booba was starved, having thrown away her $4.50 on incense and horoscopes.

She deigned to blink.

He was hardly wrinkled at all. No pruney old lines. Instead he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had grooves down his cheeks like Johnny Cash—not that Johnny Cash was where it's at, but you wouldn't absolutely throw up at the idea of balling Johnny Cash. And he had a black glossy beard that looked like the one on the cat who lay down his cape for old Queen Elizabeth. And he was tall, and thin, and even if his hair cleared his shirt collar, it wasn't sickeningly short. Besides, the shirt itself was absolutely weird, eerie colors and patterns writhing on some strange shimmering cloth.

He said very little. Boys always babbled in an effort to entertain her, and she took a wicked delight in pouting just to watch them sweat. But this man watched her, mostly, and not like any average dirty old man. He reminded her more of her tomcat Genghis contemplating the aquarium. The man didn't even twitch like a tomcat; he seemed more amused than hungry. Her little pelvis throbbed again.

Smiling, eyes as gentle as the Lily Maid's, she let herself drift into rape fantasies. Booba had never been raped herself, but she knew of two girls who claimed to have been.

He was speaking.

Wow! He was saying that if they left right away they could make the Mother Aper's concert. The cheapest seats were $8.50. She'd never seen them once since their lead singer got busted for exposing himself to the studio audience on Ed Sullivan's show.

But did she want to be seen anyplace really groovy with a man this old? What would it do to her image? He was tall and lean and evil looking, but still she was unsure.

Then she saw, really saw, his garments, as if some sudden refulgence had kindled their table. His shirt, that fantastic prismal shirt, was open down to the strange-wrought massive silver buckle of the belt which held up his panne-velvet hip-huggers, the first pubic curls below his hard belly cosseting the buckle. His opalescent trousers, like latex poured over his lower body, emphasized every muscle, every protuberance. He was not barefoot, but his boots were suitably raunchy. It was his cape that decided it. A great, heavy black cape—was it silk, satin, velvet?—with a lining that must have been woven from an acid freak-out. With that cape he most certainly had the weirdest outfit she had ever seen anywhere.

She realized suddenly that his wonderful beard made it quite impossible to estimate his age exactly. And with those clothes, who would be wondering about his age? The essential thing was that nobody could overlook her when she walked in anyplace, anyplace, with that haberdashery in escort.

"Can you loan me a dime to call my mommy?" she asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She told her mother that Feebie had invited her to spend the night, an invitation warmly seconded by Feebie's parents. Booba had employed the most skillful, subtle and unyielding propaganda campaign to convince her mommy that Feebie was a wholesome influence, that the only reason she wasn't in a convent was that the other novices might be a little coarse for her sensibilities. The fact that the Freans had money made it that much easier to sell Booba's mommy on Feebie.

Feebie promised to leave her bedroom window open—her parents would be flaked out on gin as usual, oblivious to what time who or what got in.

He had the grooviest car Booba had ever seen. She began to realize how arresting, virile and intelligent older men were. Gliding down the freeway at homicidal speed, her little pelvis vibrating like a Moog . . .

"Wow! You must have a really groovy pad," she said.

Well, one thing led to another, and there she was in his pad, and it was a trip. His stereo just about split her skull open before she had a thing, and then he brought out some hash straight from Hong Kong, and she wondered what she'd ever seen in younger men.

If she says "groovy" once more, he thought, I will lay a plague of boils on her.

By now she was prattling in imbecile monologue. About foxy dudes and Acapulco gold and Jim Morrison and Mick. . .

He restrained himself. Defaced, she would be of no use to him. And was it not, after all, her very mindlessness, her luscious immaturity, which made her that much more maddening? Wasn't that exactly what he looked for in a girl these days?

On she prattled, drawing from some dank minuscule crease in her glabrous little cerebrum profundities about alienation and the establishment and Huey, sensitivity awareness, truth and meaning. Dear Belial, he thought, this must be the most pompous generation since Cromwell.

His nerve ends hissing and crackling like a short circuit, he fled to his kitchen, where he mixed her a Mai Tai, thinking he might get her inebriated so that she would behave like any mature, disgusting drunk. With more than a little malice, he threw in a pinch of wolfbane, a scrap of mandrake root, a drop of this and that horripilating elixir.

UH! UNNNHHHUH!

The Mai Tai exploded in the sink, dissolving the porcelain in a blinding ebullition.

She had turned up his stereo.

Trembling, he mixed a loathsome, an unspeakable brew, and flavored it with cherry cola.

She was dancing. She had shed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her poncho and her little nipples stood out assertively under her membranous shirt.

Turning down the music, he plied her with liquor and flattery, little dreaming how familiar she was with both.

Finally, fixing her with all the dark power of his fathomless gaze, he moved close.

While she snuggled, innocently fingering his belt buckle, he made his pitch. How they were destined to meet. How he had recognized her potential from the moment he saw her. How exquisitely they would work together. What he'd give to have her join his extended family. She could set her own hours, sleep late . . . income, furs, diamonds, cars, yachts, adoration, acid, hash, downers on the house, rock singers, actors, producers. And a contract guaranteeing that she would be taken care of forever and ever—one big trip for all eternity.

She listened solemnly, her great luminous eyes all misty with an appetite the likes of which he'd not seen since the night he signed up Thais.

But this was not some simple Eastern courtesan. This was not some impulsive Borgia, some dreary Du Barry. This was Booba, a child of her time. And Booba knew that she would have everything he offered, and more, without doing a thing, just by the magic of wanting, because she was her own enchanting, maddening, irresistible Booba. And, being quite unable to think of herself as anything but lovely, full of juice and estrogen, Booba had no thoughts about aging, so that eternity interested her not a whit.

He offered her terrible powers, dark mysteries the likes of which he had uncovered for no mortal. He lowered himself to the point of wheedling this child.

And then it came out. The irremovable obstacle.

She could never trust anyone over thirty.

Demoralized, reckless in his exhaustion, he took from her hand the drink he had so irresponsibly concocted, and he drained it, and the rage this child had roused in him so weakened him that he, *he*, found himself assailed by what he could not fail to recognize, a torment he had often fanned in others but never felt before.

He knew it to be—

LUST

The first rule of his calling was Never Get Involved. Agonized, tasting the full horror of his disgrace, knowing he was about to corrupt his profession, his soul, his very style, he seized that enchanting nymph in an embrace more terrible than that of any leopard, any python, any Tarquin.

They grappled. He might well have ravished her then and there with her enthused co-operation—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for she was terribly curious—but for one thing.

"Oh, wow," she said, her delicate hand pressed firmly over her crotch. "I'd love to. I mean, I think you're the grooviest. But I'm having my class picture taken tomorrow, and Feebie says it gives you zits."

"Gives you what?" he shrieked, maddened but unable to turn away from anything that might render this child comprehensible.

"She says balling really screws up your complexion."

With that, she reached with her free hand for his stereo and—

THIS IS THE DAWNING OF THE AGE OF AQUARIUS . . .

One hundred eighty decibels shattering all the aeons of black wisdom enshrined within his head.

He stumbled into his bedroom, calling down fire, flood, gnats, and freeways upon this planet, and cutting off all electricity in the building.

Later, in the darkness and the stillness he found his way back to her side.

"You know what I've been thinking?" she whispered. "I was thinking how I'd love a MacDonald's hamburger. Exercise always makes me hungry."

She devoured two hamburgers, a paper of french fries, and a strawberry shake while he sat behind the wheel of the Maserati, idly increasing the coliform bacteria count in her hamburger even while he knew it was unworthy of him. His fathomless gaze stark and desolate as he stared into the narrow tunnel of time, imagining generations yet to come, he thanked his archenemy that he had not been cursed with the light of foreknowledge.

He let her out at Feebie Frean's, watched her round complacent little behind wriggle as she walked away all unimpressed by the magnitude of her triumph.

Burning, degraded, all that quintessential pride in ruins, he suddenly understood. God help him, he understood. He saw that he had to fail.

For the child had no conception of evil.

Almost mortally wounded, he found the place where it began, as if he could make it come out differently, somehow.

He sat at the table from where he had spied her first.

They were dancing, perhaps a score of them. The musicians were taking a break, but the patrons danced. And were they all, all of them, in not comprehending evil, quite beyond it? Did this, then, make them innocent?

For a moment he felt again the hot surge of the unthinkable impulse which had brought upon him the deepest defeat of his career. For him, himself, *him,* to be so assailed, so degraded . . .

To give up everything, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grovel, to be enslaved to a mindless, egocentric, babbling bubble of banality. That child . . . these children . . .

FWAAAANNNGGGG

Acned, agued, acrogenic, carnal and androgynous, the Merdé began to play, the lead singer, Dynel wig slipping crazily as he resolutely humped his guitar, lipping wetly at the microphone . . .

Unnnh. UH. UH. Buh-aye-beee. UNNHHH.

In a swirl of black and scarlet the demonic presence fled.

There was not a one of them he'd have as a gift. They'd drive every damned soul in the place up the walls within a week.

Stalking from the coffee house, he called down, in a fit of mere pique, a calamity so hideous upon that place that those within were rendered sober and contemplative beyond their years for the remainder of their natural lives.

He made the next flight to Washington. After a few weeks mending fences, he'd be on to London, then Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Peking, the old territory.

God, he thought, was there ever a time when it all meant something?

Generations, generations. How he despised self-pity.

He accepted another drink from the stewardess who simpered over him. They all did. Breathing estros and Binaca into his face. She'd be easy.

Too easy.

He was sweating under his shirt. A gray Hathaway shirt. A gray man in a gray suit. The gray wings of the aircraft sliced the rain. His gin tasted gray.

His armpits smelled funky. His hair felt nappy.

He saw himself, hung up in a gray bird cutting through a gray drizzle. Riding out there all alone. Out there riding on a shoeshine and a smile.

Coming next month

Our April issue will be the fifth in a series of special issues, each devoted to the work of a distinguished writer of science fiction and fantasy. The subject this time is **Poul Anderson.** Featured will be a brand-new, complete short novel by Mr. Anderson. It's called "The Queen of Air and Darkness." The issue will also include James Blish's critical essay on Poul Anderson's work, a personal profile by Gordon R. Dickson, and a bibliography. The cover is by Kelly Freas. The April issue is on sale February 4, but you can make sure that you receive a copy by sending us the card insert or the coupon on page 32. All of these special issues have become collector's items, and almost all are out of print.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

SCIENTIFANTASY specialist: Books, magazines. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood, Saddle River, N.J. 07458.

TWO issues of P.S. Magazine for $1.00. Humor and nostalgia by Jean Shepherd, Nat Hentoff, Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, William Tenn, others. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

SPECIALISTS: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction. Books, Pocketbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, Post Office Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., New York 11754.

30,000 magazines for sale; science fiction, western, detective, adventure, others. We buy collections, too. Send list, enclosing stamp. Magazine Center, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark. 72203.

British editions of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION and VENTURE SCIENCE FICTION—while they last, 60¢ each, two for $1, four for $2. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

Galaxie—the French edition of Galaxy—while they last: 60¢ each, two for $1.00. Send remittance to Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

70 Page catalog Arkham Fantasy Burroughs, Mirage Press Science Fiction pulp, paperbacks, comics. Send 50¢ Passaic Book Center, 594 Main Avenue, Passaic, N. J. 07055.

QUALITY USED HARDBOUND BOOKS-SF, mysteries, westerns, general fiction, nonfiction. Free Lists. Aspen Bookhouse, RD 1, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

Used science fiction paperbacks, discounted; lists 15¢. Horst Schmid, 15489 Dixie, Detroit, Mich. 48239.

Wittiest, wildest, astrological book ever written. "The Lopsided Zodiac". (Formerly "The Sex Zodiac".) $1.25 postpaid. Jon Lane Enterprises, P. O. Box 682, Portland, Oregon 97207.

SF-Fantasy magazines, books, paperbacks. List free. Robert Madle, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, Md. 20853.

SF—Fantasy Books for sale. Gordon Barber, 35 Minneapolis Ave., Duluth, Minn. 55803.

SF Bargains. List free. Werewolf Bookshop, Verona 4G, Pa. 15147.

Mercury Mysteries—while they last—50¢ each; 3 for $1. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE BOOK "999 Successful, Little-Known Businesses." Work home! Plymouth, 435W, Brooklyn, New York 11218.

NEW YORK importers Directory $2.00! Details-offers $.25! Larry Lindokken, 115 N. Orchard St., Madison, Wis. 53715.

HYPNOTISM

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington, 98502.

Hypnotism Revealed. Free Illustrated Details. Powers, 12015 Sherman Road, North Hollywood, California 91605.

FREE Hypnotism, Self-Hypnosis. Sleep learning Catalog! Drawer G-400, Ruidoso, New Mexico 88345.

PERSONAL

WITCHCRAFT, VOODOO HEADQUARTERS. Spells Galore! Occult Correspondence Club. Catalog, 25¢. Cauldron, Box 403-FSF, Rego Park, N.Y. 11374.

Learn what handwriting reveals. $3.00 (refundable with analysis). HALLMARK HANDWRITING, 4624 N. St. Louis, Chicago, Ill. 60625.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $3.00 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MISCELLANEOUS

MAKE BIG MONEY raising chinchillas, rabbits, guinea pigs for us. Catalog 25¢. Keeney Brothers Farms, Inc., New Freedom, Pa. 17349 or Summerfield, Fla. 32691.

ESP LABORATORY. This new research/service group can help you. For FREE information write: Al G. Manning, ESP Laboratory, 7559 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.

Anyone seriously interested in financing a feature motion picture for theatrical release or would be interested in purchasing shares in the production—for details please write Gary King, 517 E. Republic, Peoria, Ill. 61603.

FANTASTIC—BIZARRE—UNUSUAL! Large, illustrated catalog of Magic, Satanism, Sorcery, Voodoo, Witchcraft, etc. 1,000 curious items. 10¢. International, Box 2505-F, Prescott, Az. 86301.

FOREIGN EDITIONS of Fantasy and Science Fiction. A few copies of French, German, Italian, and Portuguese editions available at 75¢ each; four for $3.00. Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

WANTED

Wanted: Old Comic Books 1933-1955. Harvey King, 1562 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230.

YOUR MARKET PLACE

A market is people—alert, intelligent, active people.

Here you can reach 180,000 people (averaging three readers per copy—60,000 paid circulation). Many of them are enthusiastic hobbyists—collecting books, magazines, stamps, coins, model rockets, etc.—actively interested in photography, music, astronomy, painting, sculpture, electronics.

If you have a product or service of merit, tell them about it. The price is right: $3.00 for a minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. To keep the rate this low, we must request remittance with the order.

Post office box and number count as two words. No charge for zip code.

Advertising Dept., Fantasy & Science Fiction
P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

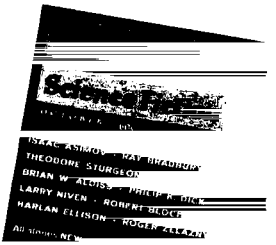
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

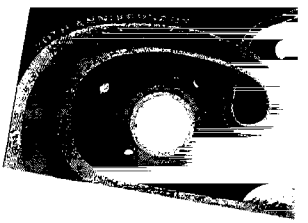
The Imprint of Quality

(since 1937)

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

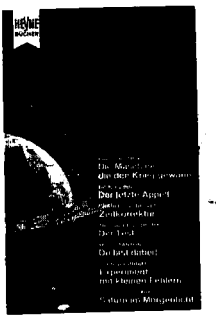

ISAAC ASIMOV · RAY BRADBURY
THEODORE STURGEON
BRIAN W. ALDISS · PHILIP K. DICK
LARRY NIVEN · ROBERT BLOCH
HARLAN ELLISON · ROGER ZELAZNY



F&SF's readers are both young (84% under 45) and educated (62% have attended college). When they want relaxation or stimulation in reading, they turn to the best works of imagination and to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. "F&SF regularly supplies the finest the field has to offer in the way of short fiction"—*Clifton Fadiman*. Compelling fiction, along with informative and stimulating features on *Books* (James Blish) and *Science* (Isaac Asimov), have earned F&SF its reputation as tops in the field.

Portuguese Edition

French Edition



German Edition

MERCURY PRESS, INC. • 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED